UNDER TWENTY

Messages to Big Boys and Girls

CHARLES E. JEFFERSON

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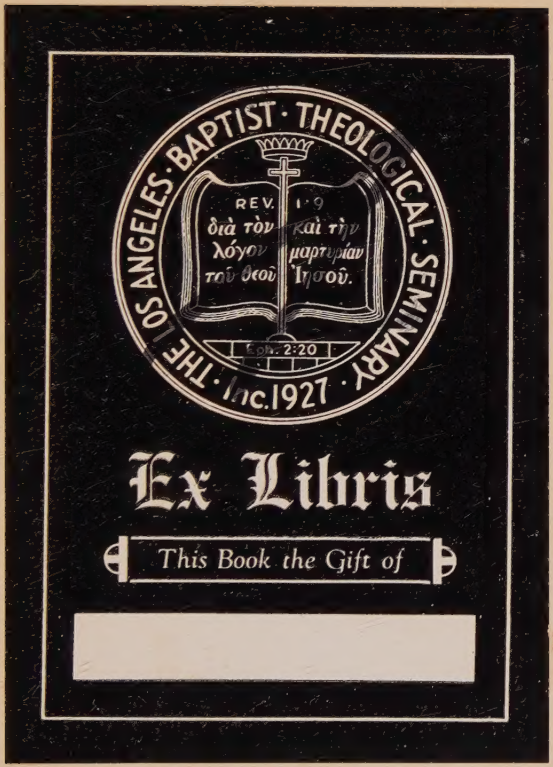
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Under Twenty

Messages to Big Boys and Girls

By
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Contents

I.	The Sin of Untruthfulness	5
II.	Lions and Adders	20
III.	A Brave Builder	36
IV.	The Two Roads	52
V.	The Tongue	68
VI.	The Importance of Little Things	83
VII.	"Preparedness"	100
VIII.	Discipline	115
IX.	Precious Jewels	131
X.	Wings	146
XI.	The "Mayflower"	161
XII.	Five Wrong Ideas of God	177

I

THE SIN OF UNTRUTHFULNESS

"I hate and abhor falsehood."—PSALM 119, 163.

"I HATE and abhor falsehood." That is putting it rather strong. Had the poet said, "I hate falsehood," he would have expressed himself with vigour. Hate is a robust and powerful word. Such a word as "dislike" is pale and weak. When we dislike a thing, we do not relish it, but we can get on with it. We dislike rain on "Children's Sunday," and would prefer the sunshine, but we can endure the rain. A snake, however, we hate. We desire to kill it or to run away from it. We cannot remain in peace near anything we hate. Had the poet written, "I hate lying," we should have known he wanted to kill it, or to take to his heels. But he goes on to add the word "abhor," which is a far stronger word than hate. Hate is dislike raised to the boiling point, and abhor is dislike raised to the temperature of condensed steam. It is a word which suggests tremendous tumult of the heart. It carries with it the idea of bristling or shaking or shivering or shuddering. A thing which we abhor makes us

quiver with dread. It scares us, and makes our hair stand up. This poet says that falsehood is such a hideous thing that it makes his blood run cold when he thinks of it. He not only hates it, he abhors it.

This was because his parents had taught him what a nasty thing falsehood is. Hebrew poets and prophets all agreed that the sin of lying is heinous. When people went to the Synagogue, they were almost sure to hear something said against untruthfulness. When fathers instructed their children, they never failed to warn them against the sin of telling lies. And so it became a proverb in Israel that there are seven things which God hates, one of which is " a lying tongue." In picking out the things which they felt sure Jehovah despised, teachers never failed to include in the black list a tongue which tells lies. " Lying lips are an abomination unto the Lord," was a maxim which everybody accepted. Another popular saying was, "A poor man is better than a liar." Look at this rich man. He has gotten his money by telling lies. He has big houses and broad acres and many bags of gold. Look at this poor man. He has no palace or farm or money. He owns nothing but the clothes on his back, and those are shabby. But he is truthful. Hebrew teachers looked at both men, and then said: " The poor man is better than a liar." One of the prayers often repeated was, " Deliver my soul, O Lord, from

lying lips and a deceitful tongue." It was because of teaching like this, that the man who wrote the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm came to say, "I hate and abhor falsehood." When he was a boy he had shuddered at the baseness of telling lies, and when he became a man his abhorrence of it did not depart from him.

The purpose of this sermon is to get into your heart the very feeling of the Hebrew poet. You all, I hope, dislike falsehood, but I want to help you to hate it. Many of you, I suppose, hate it already, and I wish I could help you to abhor it. I wish to make it so clear to you just what falsehood is and what it does, that you will want to kill it, or run away from it as fast as you can. I hope you will shudder at it. I want to make your hair stand on end.

Lying is one of the meanest and most brutal of sins. It is a sin which runs after and catches little children. When a big fellow of eighteen pounces down on a little boy of six and hits him and knocks him over, and kicks him after he is down, we call him a bully or brute or ruffian. And if he struck a little girl, we should call him a devil. Now the sin of lying is a ruffian sin. It does not spare the young and the weak. There are sins which have almost a sense of honour. They do not attack little boys and girls, but wait until they grow up. They wait until they are fifteen or sixteen or seventeen. Other sins are more considerate still, and

do not make their attack until a man is twenty-five or thirty-five or even forty. There are sins so courteous that they do not strike their heaviest blows until a man is old. But the sin of lying has no sense of honour at all. It lacks both mercy and pity. It will rush furiously on a little boy or girl of eight, or seven or six, or even five, and leave bruises and wounds. It will shoot its poisoned arrows into a little girl, bringing the blood. Many a person is weak all his life because of the blood he lost when he was young. It will seize a boy and put him in prison, and in many cases will keep him there the rest of his life. Men often remain liars to the day of their death because they were made prisoners in the jail of Deceit before they were ten. If you knew how despicably mean falsehood is, you would every one shudder at the very thought of it.

The Demon of Falsehood is not only heartless, but it has no conscience. It never does anything but deceive. It tells lies all the time. You can never believe a word it says. You have no idea of the extent of its deceitfulness. It is because it is so tricky that so many are caught by it. It says, "Lying is common, and therefore it cannot be bad. Most people tell lies, even good people tell them sometimes; why should anybody then feel disgraced if caught lying? Do not many lawyers lie, and many physicians, editors, teachers, merchants, farmers, and mechanics? You are in good com-

pany when you tell lies, and therefore you need not hesitate to tell some more of them." This is the way the Spirit of Falsehood talks, but it is only to deceive. One might as well take you to a blind asylum and say, "Look at all these blind children—there are hundreds of them—you might as well be blind yourself." Or one might take you to an insane asylum and say, "Look at all these young men and women and these old men and women who have lost their reason. There are thousands of them, and you might as well be crazy too." Or one might take you to the cemetery and say, "See these long rows of graves. Little boys and girls are dead, so are fathers and mothers, so are aged men and women. Thousands are dead, including the wise and the great and the good—and you might as well be dead yourself." What a mean argument it is to say that because many persons tell lies, therefore lying is not a sin, or because thousands are liars, you can safely follow their example! Lying is indeed common, and that makes it all the more terrible. Because so many persons have been stricken down by it, ought to make you shiver. It is when smallpox is in every section of the city, that there is greatest reason to be alarmed.

The very commonness of the sin of lying blinds our eyes to the foulness of it. We get so used to it that we forget how vile and deadly it is. An English poet wrote long ago four lines which every boy and girl should memorize:

"Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

The vice of lying is so often seen that it loses its hideousness, and before we realize what we are doing we are ready not only to endure and pity it, but to give it a place in our heart.

That this is so can be seen by certain expressions which the world has come to use. You have all heard of lies told in fun, laughing lies, one might call them. Many persons think no harm is done by telling lies as a joke. But a lie has no sense of humour. When you play with it, it thinks you are in earnest. A lie is like a hornet. You cannot play with a hornet. A hornet is always serious, and does not know how to play. If you say, "Mr. Hornet, I think I'll have some sport with you," he does not understand what you say. A hornet is never so much in earnest as when a boy tries to play with it. No matter how full of fun the boy may be at the beginning, he goes off with some of the hornet's poison in his blood. You cannot play with a mad dog. A mad dog makes things lively. When one rushes down the street, everybody is awake. But a mad dog is so terribly in earnest that he has no time to play. If you play with a mad dog you throw away your life. A lie cannot be played with. A boy or girl who lies for fun

gets the virus in his blood, and pretty soon lies will be told in earnest.

We sometimes hear of "little lies." They are so common that we have given them a special name—"fibs." A "fib" is a little lie. Many persons see no wrong in telling fibs, and so they tell them all the time. But what is a little lie? How can you tell whether a lie is small or large? How will you measure it? By the number of words in which it is expressed? That will hardly do. If you break a pitcher, and your mother says: "Did you break the pitcher?" and you answer, "No!" is that a little lie because you told it in one word? If you had said, "No, I did not break the pitcher," would that have made the lie seven times bigger because you used seven words instead of one? No! The first lie is just as big as the second. The number of words has nothing to do with the size of a falsehood. No words at all need be used. A little shake of the head will tell a lie as big as any which can be put into words. Is a lie little when it concerns a matter which is small? If a five-cent piece lies on the table, and you take it, and your father asks: "Did you see the nickel lying on the table?" and you answer, "No!" is that a little lie because it was about a little piece of money? Suppose the nickel had been a diamond ring worth a thousand dollars, and you had taken it, and had said you did not take it, the theft in the second case would have been larger than the

theft in the first case, but the lie would have been no bigger. The fact is that there are no little lies. If you think they are, you are being imposed on by the Demon of Falsehood. All lies are big. They are big because they involve the character and destiny of an immortal soul, and because you never know when a lie is told what will be the harvest. Many things seem small which are in reality great. You can hold a seed on the end of your little finger. It is a little thing, but a tree can come out of it. A gypsy moth is a little creature, and two of them can be held in a baby's hand. But those two moths when set free and given time in which to work, can eat up a hundred lovely groves and all the glory of a mighty forest. The point of a needle is very small, but by it you can put out your eye. A lie may seem small to you, but by the fine point of it you can destroy the eye of the soul. Every lie is big enough to make one shudder.

You have heard also of "white lies." Lies in fun we endure, little lies we pity, white lies we embrace. But are lies ever white? Calling a thing white does not make it white. There are no white lies. All of them are smutted with the soot of the lower world. Men try sometimes to whitewash them, but whitewash does not change the nature of anything. You might whitewash the kitchen stove, but the stove underneath the whitewash would still be black, and the black would show out here and there through the white, and a few hot fires would

drive the thin and flimsy whiteness all away. You might paint a black horse white, but black he would still remain. The first hard rain-storm that drenched him in the field would send him to the stable black again. Whitewashing lies is foolish business. You may cover them over with wishy-washy talk, but it soon rubs off. Even if in this world we delude ourselves into thinking that some lies are white, the water of that river which rolls between this world and the next will wash away the earth-made whiteness, and in the world of eternal light we shall learn that the indestructible colour of every lie is black.

But are not certain lies blacker than others? Yes, they look blacker, and for this reason. Lies can be mixed with other sins, and the depth of the blackness of the lie depends on the blackness of the sin with which it is mixed. If you tell a falsehood in order to exalt yourself, it is black. If you tell a falsehood to hurt some one else, it is blacker. In one case the lie is soaked in vanity, in the second case it is soaked in malice. As malice is a blacker sin than vanity, a lie told to pull down another is blacker than a lie to puff up oneself. It is blacker because the blackness of hate soaks into it and you see not simply one sin but two. But do not forget that a lie is always black, no matter what it is soaked in, and that it remains black no matter how long you keep it soaking.

Then again there are half-lies, and there are

people who think that just as half a loaf of bread is better than none, so is half a truth. But it is when truth and falsehood are mingled that falsehood does its deadliest work. When a murderer wants to poison his enemy, he does not send him a little bottle full of poison. The taste of the poison would prevent its being swallowed. But if the poison is mixed with candy or cake, then the murderous scheme succeeds. It is when one tells only a part of the truth, leaving out the part which is really most important, that he reaches the lowest depths of deceitfulness and displays the shameful cunning of a poisoner. A great poet has said this in some lines which every one ought to write on his heart:

"He said likewise
That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies,—
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight."

But if lying is so wicked, why do so many people tell lies? There are many reasons. Lying is convenient. It helps one out of hard places. When pushed into a corner it is possible sometimes to get out simply by telling a lie. A wise man once said that "Sin has many tools but a lie is the handle which fits them all." It is wonderful how

handy a lie is. It can be used in many ways and for many purposes. The same wise man also said that truths are like ivory cubes. You cannot roll them. They stay where they are put. Whereas lies are spheres like marbles, and you can roll them anywhere. Many persons tell untruths because they have found them so convenient. Others lie, because of vanity. They like to tell a bigger story than any one else has told. To make an impression they exaggerate. Boys and girls sometimes stretch the truth in order to make old folks open their eyes. One can sometimes lift himself an inch higher by standing on a lie.

Some people lie because they are too cowardly to speak the truth. They dare not face the consequences of their actions. A lie is a quilt and they hide their face in it. It is a wall and they get behind it for protection. Boys have sometimes lied simply because they were cowards. They dared not face a punishment and became in the same moment a coward and a liar. Others lie because of weakness. They are overcome by their feelings. You know how the wind can blow a boat out of its course. Just so can the feelings blow the tongue off the track of truth. When men get excited in political campaigns, they find it hard to speak the truth about the men on the other side. When boys and girls dislike any one intensely, they ought to be careful when they try to speak. The feelings are winds which blow out of

the caverns of the soul, and they blow so hard that they often blow people who really mean to tell the truth clean into the land of Falsehood. A sense of weakness often leads to lying. If one's strength is small he is tempted to make it up by big talk. If a boy in school finds that the other boys are getting ahead of him it is easy to catch up with them by cheating. Falsehood is a crutch on which a lame boy can hobble along and keep up with the boys who are mentally stronger than he. Lying is a confession of inferiority. Strong boys and girls have less temptation to cheat than those who are weak. Some lies are born of malice. They are told to wound and to hurt. A lie is a dagger which one can thrust into another without going to jail. Many people, too cautious to use either knives or their fists, stab and smite their enemies by slanderous words. Such mean wretches are not sent to the penitentiary, but they pay dearly for their sin. One may escape the policeman and jailer, but he cannot get away from God.

Strange to say, men have been known to tell lies in order to do good. To make the world better they have said things which are not so. In order to advance the truth they have practiced deceit. They have told lies for God. All such persons are deceived. It is never right to do wrong in order to make the world better. "He serves all who dares be true."

Everything that is wrong brings punishment.

Lies are bad, and therefore everybody who tells lies suffers. A lie blisters the soul. It leaves a scar on the heart. It breaks one all up. The practice of lying stunts moral growth. If some one should tell you to-day that your body would never grow another inch taller, you would cry. No one wants to be a runt or a dwarf. But lying is a poison which when introduced into the soul stops spiritual growth. The person who lies is stunted. He remains a moral dwarf. Lying is a deadly disease. Like leprosy and cancer, it spreads until the whole soul is ruined. It is worse than cancer. Cancer eats only the flesh. Falsehood devours the spirit. A man who lies does not belong to the company of respectable people. Every liar is disreputable no matter what he wears or in how fine a house he lives. A man may be respected and be a liar, just as a bandit or a cut-throat may be respected by men of his class. But to be respectable a man must be worthy of respect, and no man is worthy of respect who makes a practice of telling lies. He belongs among the pickpockets and counterfeiters and cheats.

Never imagine that you can be a liar and still be respectable. Even if others respect you, you cannot respect yourself. No liar has self-respect. If you lie, you are obliged to live with a liar. You never can get away from yourself. And you can never be in harmony with God. On the last page of the Bible there is a picture of a beautiful city—

the City of God. Inside there is everything lovely. Outside, there are six classes of outcasts who are not allowed to go in. Among them are "every one that loveth and maketh a lie." Liars are not permitted to see God.

Do you wonder that the Hebrew poet shuddered? The Apostle Paul was in the habit of quoting to the Christians of the first century some strong words of an old prophet—Zechariah—on the duty of speaking the truth, and it is interesting to note that this is the very prophet who has left us a beautiful picture of the new Jerusalem, with old men and women sitting in the sun, and boys and girls romping in the streets. The prophet lived in dismal times. His city was poor, and life was hard. There were few old people. War and hardship did not permit men to grow old. Children also were few. Most of the inhabitants of the city were men, and these in middle life. But what is the world without old people, and without boys and girls? Society is maimed and dull without the aged and the young. The prophet looks into the future and dreams of a city that is to be. There will be a city sometime in which the old people will be happy, and the boys and girls will fill with laughter all the streets, if only men once learn to speak truth to one another and establish truth and justice at the center of the city's life. Cities and nations as well as individuals cannot prosper unless they love the truth.

Speaking the truth, then, is a part of our religion. "Lie not one to another"—that is a text to remember. We are not good Christians if we lie. If members of the church do not speak the truth, they bring disgrace upon themselves and scandal upon the Church of Christ. A lying Christian is a monstrosity. The Church is pledged to speak the truth, because the Church belongs to Jesus. He hated falsehood in its every form. He abhorred deceit. "The Devil is a liar," that is the description which He gave of the Spirit of Evil, and when He wished to describe Himself, He said: "I am the truth." When you tell lies, you are on the side of the Evil One; when you speak the truth, you are on the side of the Son of God.

Make up your mind to-day to speak the truth from henceforth and forever. To do this will not be easy. Indeed, it is quite hard. I do not know how any one can do it, unless he gets assistance from the Lord of Truth. He is mighty. He is ready to help. He helps all who ask for help. If I were you, I would ask Him. I would ask Him every day.

II

LIONS AND ADDERS

"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder."
—PSALM 91 : 13.

MY subject is "lions and adders," and I am going to take for my text a sentence of a beautiful little poem written a long time ago by a Hebrew poet. Fortunately for us, the poem has been preserved in our Bible and is known as the ninety-first Psalm. I hope that before the day is over you will open your Bible at this psalm, and put a pencil mark around the sentence chosen for my text; and on your seventieth birthday—if God lets you live so long on the earth—I hope you will read the psalm over again, and when you come to the verse of my text, you can say: "I heard a sermon on that sentence when I was a child"; and I hope you will be able to go on and say that the sermon did you good all the days of your life. The text is: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder," thou shalt walk upon, walk over the lion and adder, and they will not hurt thee. Thou shalt conquer, subdue, overcome the lion and adder. The one will not devour thee and

the other will not poison thee. Over both of them thou shalt stand forth a victor. That is the promise which we are to think about now.

We all know what a lion is, for we have all seen one. We know what he looks like. We have seen his big mouth, his sharp teeth, his huge paws, his long mane, his majestic face, and we have heard his thunderous voice. We have seen him eat his dinner, and we know how he goes about it. We have seen him chew up big chunks of meat, and lap up the blood, and crunch the bones, and while we have never seen him eat a man, we know just how he would do it. He would chew up a man's flesh and lick his blood and crunch his bones, just as he devours a sheep or a cow or a horse. And so you see my text is a wonderful promise. You shall tread on the lion, the bravest and strongest of beasts, and he will not hurt you. You shall put your foot on him, and he will not bite.

We all know also what an adder is. We may not have seen a living one, but we have all seen a picture of one, and we know that an adder is a little snake. Sometimes he is not very dangerous, but the particular kind which the Hebrew poet had in mind was venomous and deadly. He was just as much to be feared as a lion. It would be hard to think of two creatures farther apart than a lion and an adder. One is big, the other is small. One is noble in looks, the other is mean and ugly. One has a powerful voice, the other is voiceless.

One makes a noise when he walks, trampling the leaves and dry twigs beneath his feet, whereas the other glides along without making any noise whatever. The one devours his victim, the other simply poisons it and then lets it alone. The one kills because he is hungry and wants a good dinner, the other kills simply for the fun of killing. The one tears his prey to pieces, the other injects into the blood a drop of poison, which stops the action of the heart. Both are alike in one thing, they are cruel and deadly enemies of man, and so this promise becomes still more wonderful. You shall be able to trample not only on the big lion but also on the sly and poisonous adder. On the strongest of the animals and the most treacherous of the serpents you shall walk and suffer no harm. Certainly a promise like that is enough to make us all shout for joy.

But at this point possibly some boy will say, "The promise is not intended for me. There are no lions at large in America, and I do not need to walk upon them even if I could. They are all shut up in strong cages, and there is no danger of my getting eaten. Nor are there any adders of which I am afraid. There are no adders in the city and there are none in the country where I spend my summer. Therefore the promise has no value for me. It may have been a good promise to a man in Palestine where there were lions at liberty, and ever so many poisonous snakes, but here in Amer-

ica one cannot walk upon wild animals and deadly reptiles, even if he were so inclined." What shall we say to a boy who makes that sort of an objection?

The answer is that the poet is not thinking of animals and serpents at all. He is dealing in figures, symbols, pictures. His mind is not on a real lion nor is he speaking of an actual snake. This sentence is a picture sentence. We are all familiar with picture cards. They are very brightly coloured and quickly catch the eye. Sometimes they contain pictures of animals and sometimes pictures of people, but no matter what are the figures in the picture, they always have something to teach. Now in olden times they had no printing presses, and therefore they could not print cards. They did not know how to make the beautiful coloured pictures with which the world now is filled. When men in those days wanted to paint a picture they did it with words. They painted pictures with their own breath upon the air. Instead of picture cards, they had picture sentences, and a good sample of that kind of sentences is my text. What a striking picture it is! There is the figure of a man with his right foot on a lion and his left foot on an adder. No one who has ever looked on that picture will ever be able to forget it. The man and the lion and the adder all taken together set forth a great truth, and just what that truth is we want to find out.

I have said that my text is a picture sentence. We might call it a little fable. You know that a fable is a picture story. A long time ago there lived a famous Greek, named Æsop, who had a genius for making fables. Hundreds of brilliant men have tried to pattern after Æsop but not one of them has ever come up to him. If you do not have a copy of Æsop's fables in your house, then it is one of the very first books you ought to buy. Now when you read Æsop you soon see that he is always talking about animals. He tells you about an ass in a lion's skin, and about a wolf in sheep's clothing, and about a country mouse and a city mouse, and about ever so many other creatures. There are as many animals in Æsop's fables as in a fair-sized menagerie. Now what made Æsop talk so much about animals? He talked about animals because he was interested in men. His animals are not animals at all. They are virtues and vices, principles and truths, men and women, and he pretends to be talking about animals, when all the time he is talking about dispositions of the human heart. It is hard to talk about a virtue in such a way that people can see it, but if you turn the virtue into an animal and have the animal walk up and down before an audience everybody is certain to see it. It is difficult to talk about a vice so that people can see just how ugly it is, but if you turn it into a snake then everybody shudders and tries to get away from it as far as he

can. That is what the Greek Æsop was always doing—he was always turning virtues and vices into animals, and the result was that he became one of the greatest teachers in all Greece.

Now this Hebrew poet had something of the genius of Æsop. He could turn moral truths and spiritual realities into animals, and this is what he does in this beautiful ninety-first Psalm. When he says that a man can tread upon the lion and adder, he is not thinking of animals and serpents, but of forms of evil. He knew that there were two kinds of evil in the world, open and secret, roaring and silent, devouring and venomous, and he called one kind a lion and the other kind an adder. You must remember that he was a poet, and a poet sees the world in pictures. It is his picture-making eyes which make a man a poet. In Palestine long ago there were a great many lions. They roamed through the forests, and they especially liked the thickets which grew on the banks of the river Jordan. Sometimes when a man was traveling through the country a lion would suddenly leap out upon him and devour him. And so people became exceedingly afraid of lions. A lion became to them the picture of a furious and cruel foe. Whenever a man became ravenous and bloodthirsty, they called him a lion. In various parts of Palestine there was a species of deadly adder. Sometimes he glided through the grass, and sometimes he hid in the crevices among the rocks. He

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was very treacherous, and many a person was attacked unawares, and soon afterward fell dead. So that an adder became the picture of an exceedingly sly and deadly enemy. If a man was vile and sneaking, his heart and tongue full of poison, then that man was called an adder. There was nothing worse that he could be named. There were two kinds of enemies then in the world—lions and adders—foes which rush out and eat their victims up, and foes which lie in ambush and sting their prey to death. The Hebrew poet looking out upon the world with his picture-making eyes sees that human life is like a journey from the cradle to the grave. He sees that there are thickets and sandy places here and there along the way. In the thickets there are lions ready to spring out upon the traveler and eat him completely up; in the desert place there are adders waiting to fasten their fangs in the unsuspecting traveler's flesh. "Lion" and "adder," those two words cover the whole world of evil. All man's enemies can be grouped under one or the other of those two heads. The poet feels the fury and treachery of moral evil, and he also feels the greatness of Almighty God, and so he does not hesitate to say that a man whose life is fed from God has within him a preserving power which will render him victorious over all his foes. The foes that spring and the foes that glide, the foes that roar and the foes that give forth no sound, the foes that devour and the

foes that paralyze, over all of them shall the God-assisted man triumph. This old promise of the Psalm is the same which Jesus gave to the seventy when He sent them forth to do His work, saying: "I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall in any wise hurt you." Not only did it become the habit of Hebrew teachers to think of bad men as lions and adders, but they spoke of Satan in the same way. One of the apostles, Simon Peter, often thought of the devil as a "roaring lion," and another apostle, Peter's friend John, sometimes called him "that old serpent." The Spirit of Evil is both, he is a lion and also a serpent. He devours and he also paralyzes. At one time he roars, at another time he keeps a treacherous silence. But no matter what may be the form of his approach, the promise is that he shall be overthrown, and that the God-protected man shall proceed along his way unharmed.

There are two kinds of dangers in the world—open and hidden—some like a lion and some like an adder. You never go down street that you are not in the midst of both kinds of dangers. That open ditch, several feet deep, at the bottom of which men are at work, repairing the water mains or laying new electric wires, that is a lion sort of danger. It roars at you so that you can hear it a hundred feet away. It roars: "I'll break your leg. I'll break your back. I'll break your neck,"

and you are so frightened by that roaring that you keep away. A lion is not so dangerous as an adder, because he gives you warning, and you usually have a chance to escape. But there is an adder kind of danger. A stone in the cornice of yonder building has worked loose and nobody knows it. The cement has given way and no one can see it from the street. The stone says nothing, and some day it will come crashing to the pavement, and if it falls upon a human head, it will crush the skull and end a life. That loose stone is an adder. The open ditch and the loosened stone are enemies to the physical life, but there are also enemies of the soul. Yonder is a crowd of boys, openly reckless and bent on mischief. They drink and swear and steal and insult women. They are a lion. They roar, and by their roaring, let you know how dangerous they are. You can see their mouth and teeth, and you know that to fall into their company, means swift and certain ruin. They are so furious and so noisy that you have abundant warning to keep away. But here is another group of boys, seemingly quite different. They are nicely dressed, they are well behaved, they live in elegant houses on fashionable streets, and they do nothing to draw the attention of the police. But the boys care nothing for God or the Bible or the church, they do not understand the meaning of duty or the value of prayer, and every boy who comes under their influence is

brought down to their worldly level. They are just as dangerous as the first set, although they do not roar like a lion. They are like the adder, silent and graceful, but full of poison. They do not spring at you, they glide silently into your heart, exercising an influence which gradually benumbs the nerves of the soul. There are companions who drag us down by brute strength as a lion does, there are comrades who undo us by the introduction of a subtle poison. If a boy's principles are loose, he himself is like a loosened stone in the cornice. He is likely to fall at any minute, and when he falls he will drag others with him to destruction. Two kinds of dangers, then, lie along our way, the open and the hidden, and the promise in our text assures us of protection against them both. The lions and the adders both alike are powerless to hurt a boy or girl, a man or woman who has learned the secret which the Hebrew poet desires to teach.

There are two kinds of passion, the lion kind and the adder kind. One kind is fierce and fiery, it shakes its mane and causes us to tremble. There is another kind which is sly and gentle, it glides into our life with the silent movement of a serpent. One of the lion passions is anger. It roars and tears men to pieces. When a man falls under the power of anger it is just as though a lion had taken possession of him. His face is at once disfigured, his language is marred and twisted, his faculties

are torn and mangled. His good sense is chewed up, and the passion like a lion puts its paws over the virtues and graces of a manly heart. Judgment, pity, fairness, patience, kindness, mercy, all are lacerated and left bleeding under the cruel paws. Yes, anger roars, and when, like a lion, it leaps upon a man, it eats him up, not his body, but the spiritual substance of his life. No wonder all the wise teachers through the ages have said in solemn tones "Beware of anger." But there are other passions just as deadly as anger. One of them is the passion for money. In its earlier development it is not at all like a lion. It does not roar, and it causes no disturbance in speech or thought or deed. A young man begins by making money the one thing essential. He thinks about it, dreams about it, works for it as he works for nothing else. By and by he adores money, idolizes it, worships it. He is very calm, clever, sensible, and many voices praise him. But the adder has gotten in its deadly work, and the heart of his highest manhood has ceased to beat. There is no more deadly sin known among men than covetousness, and none more treacherous. It is a sin of the adder type—very sly and horribly fatal. Many a man, too cautious to be caught by a lion, falls a victim to an adder.

There are two kinds of sin—one kind violent and open, the other snake like and concealed. Drunkenness is a lion sin. When a man becomes a

victim of strong drink he looks much as a man looks who has been in the clutches of a lion. Alcohol tears a man, and leaves him, if not dead, at least mangled and bleeding. When you see a drunkard on the street you see on him the marks of the beast. His very clothing shows that he has been in a tremendous struggle. His hat is crushed in, his coat is all dirty, the scratch of the beast's paw is on his face, the marks of the beast's teeth are in his flesh. Intoxicating liquor tears a man's mental faculties asunder, and leaves his moral faculties in shreds, and the poor wretch who staggers along the street proclaims by his appearance that he has met a lion and that the lion has been the victor.

But there are sins which are as fatal as drunkenness which leave no mark whatever on the body which the passer-by can see. Dishonesty is as deadly as drunkenness, but it never dishevels the hair or disarranges the clothes. Telling lies does not take the gloss off of a man's shirt front nor does stealing stain his gloves. Villains can dress well and be handsome. Some of the greatest rogues are fine-appearing men. Dishonesty is not a lion, it is an adder. It never mangles the body. It leaves no gash in the flesh. Liars and thieves are not dismembered. They are not devoured, but poisoned. The sin of dishonesty fastens itself upon them and stops the beat of the heart. A man is really dead, even though he walks up and down

the street, if he says things which are not so and takes things which do not belong to him. When a man is chewed by a lion the world can see the nature of his disaster, but when a man is bitten by an adder he may drop dead before your eyes while you remain ignorant of the cause of his death.

One of Shakespeare's most wonderful dramas is called Antony and Cleopatra, and in that drama the poet tells how the famous Egyptian Queen met her death. She was captured by Augustus Cæsar who was about to take her to his capital as a trophy of his triumph over Cleopatra's lover, Antony. The unhappy queen decided that she would never go to Rome. She ordered a farmer to bring her a basket of figs and gave instructions that into the basket along with the figs should be placed two asps or little adders. One of these she placed on her breast, another on her arm, and in a short time she was dead. When the Roman Emperor came into her palace and saw her lying cold in death, his first guess was that she had been murdered, but when he looked at her and saw that she did not bleed, he asked one of the servants who had been in the room last. When he learned that a farmer had brought the queen a basket of figs, he leaped to the conclusion that she had met her death by poison. But this explanation also failed to satisfy him, for there was no external swelling. The mystery was not cleared up until one of the attendants discovered on the breast of

the queen a drop of blood, and on one of her arms another drop of blood, and then all was clear—she had been killed by an adder. There are many men and women dead—men and women who might have been kings and queens unto God—dead to all spiritual influences and ideals, all heavenly desires and aims, and yet they do not bleed nor are they swollen. No lion has torn them with his teeth, but they are dead, and the wound from which they died lies out of sight. It was an adder that took their life. Some secret sin was admitted to their bosom. The world does not know why they are living without God and without hope, but if we could see all, we should discover down deep in the soul the slimy traces of an adder's trail.

To whom is the promise made that he shall tread on the lion and the adder? Only to a person who fulfills certain conditions. It is not every man who comes off victor over all the forms of evil. Only to him is the promise given, who is willing to do one certain thing. He must dwell in the secret place of the Highest, he must make his home in the shadow of the Mightiest. The most famous man of the ancient world was Hercules. He was renowned for his strength and the number of his victories. The first of his mighty labours was the killing of a lion. This lion was a ferocious beast, and had long held the country in a state of panic. No one could kill him. At last Hercules arrived. Strange to say even he could

not slay the lion with his club or with his arrows, but was obliged to go into the cavern where the lion was, and strangle him with his naked hands. As soon as he had killed him, he skinned him, converted the skin into a robe, and ever afterward wore this garment as an emblem of the lion-heart. The Greeks loved to think of Hercules, and often stamped his image on their coins. One of the reasons, perhaps, why Greece rose so high in splendid achievement, was that all Grecian boys and girls kept so constantly before their eyes the shining image of a victorious man. To the Greeks, Hercules was a son of God, and they built their home within the shadow of the highest type of man they knew.

We also have a Hercules, and His name is Jesus. He is God's only Son. He came into the world to conquer monsters, and He triumphed gloriously over all His foes. Throughout His life He was attacked by lions and beset by adders, but they never did Him harm. The men who hated Him and tried to turn Him from His work, had the cruelty of a lion and the venom of a serpent. One day He turned upon them, saying: "O generation of vipers!" On the cross He quoted a Psalm in which it was said of wicked men, "They gape upon me with their mouth, as a ravening and a roaring lion." But His enemies could not tear His faith, or kill His hope or paralyze His love. He went right on, undaunted, and at the end, said to His

disciples, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." He did not die until He had finished the work which His Heavenly Father had given Him to do. He is the highest of all the men whom our world has ever known, and He is also the mightiest. His image then is to be ever kept before our eyes. He is the perfect pattern of the strong and victorious man. If you want to tread upon the lion and the adder, you must look to Him for help. By living near Him you will share His strength. Dwell then in the secret place of His presence. Make your home in the shadow of His might. Your soul will be victorious over all the power of the enemy, only when your life is hid with Jesus Christ in God.

III

A BRAVE BUILDER

"I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."—NEHEMIAH 6:3.

THE words were spoken over twenty-three hundred years ago, and the heats and snows of all these centuries have never dimmed their luster. They will still be bright and glorious twenty-three hundred years from now. Let me write them on your hearts so that they shall be yours forever.

Nehemiah was a Jew. He had been the cupbearer, or Master of Ceremonies, of the great Artaxerxes, King of Persia. One day some Jews came to Shushan bearing news from Jerusalem. They had a talk with Nehemiah, and told him that the plight of Jerusalem was terrible. The walls were broken down, the gates had been burned up, and the people were all discouraged. Nehemiah loved Jerusalem, and the news made him sick at heart. Heart-sickness soon shows itself in the face. Gloom comes out through the eyes. The cupbearer could not conceal his grief. "What is the matter with you?" said the king one day.

"What makes you look so glum?" And immediately Nehemiah told the whole sad story in a way which touched the monarch's heart. "You may go to Jerusalem if you wish," he said, "and I will make you the Governor of it. You shall have authority to rebuild the walls. You may take stone out of my quarries, timber out of my forests, and I will give you the protection of my name." It was not long before Nehemiah was in Jerusalem. One night he made a careful survey of the city, riding all the way around it. This ride of Nehemiah is worthy of a place by the side of the famous midnight ride of Paul Revere. Having found out just what needed to be done, he started at once to do it.

And then the trouble began. That is where trouble always begins—at the start of great enterprises. All duties are hedged round by difficulties. All roads which lead to fortune are filled with obstacles. One cannot attempt anything fine without rousing antagonism. No advance is possible without meeting and overcoming foes. When one is moving in the right direction he always has the wind in his face. When he is making greatest progress, he finds himself rowing up-stream. It is impossible to try and build the walls of the city of God without stirring up opposition.

As soon as Nehemiah began his great work, enemies put in their appearance. They came from every direction. From the North came the

Samaritans under the leadership of Sanballat, from the East came the Ammonites spurred on by Tobiah, from the South came the Arabians under a popular chief, Geshem, while the Ashdodites made trouble on the West. This is the first thing you can always count on if you are determined to do something really worth while—you will have hindrances on every side.

It is interesting to note the methods of these enemies of Nehemiah, and they are worth our careful study, for they have never been outgrown, and are in use to this present hour.

The first thing which Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem did was to laugh. A wonderful thing is a laugh. It is a form of power. Did you ever think about the different kinds of laughter and the different results which they produce? There is a rippling, loving laughter, which seems to be woven of sunbeams, and when it is thrown on the air the whole world becomes radiant and the heart begins to sing. There is another kind of laughter which seems to be woven in the loom of the night, and wherever it falls it casts a shadow, and things smitten by its shadow wither and die. Many a person has been heartened by a laugh to go forward to do what he had started to do. Many another person has been so weakened and scared by a laugh that he has not been able to finish what he had begun. A boy can be laughed out of doing his duty. A girl can be made to cry by a laugh. San-

ballat laughed, and so did Tobiah, and so did Geshem, but Nehemiah went right on building.

When it was found that laughter would not stop the work of the builders, Sanballat and his crowd tried sneers. A sneer is a sour look of the face. If it is a vigorous sneer it runs off the tip end of the tongue into words which it makes bitter. A sneering remark is a sort of arrow which one can shoot at a human being, and if it hits him it sticks. It is a kind of bullet which can be fired into the heart, and it hurts worse than a bullet of lead. Sometimes the sneer becomes a jeer. A sneer is a baby jeer, and a jeer is a full-grown sneer. A jeer is a club with which one person can beat another, a cobblestone with which one person can knock another person down. The enemies of Nehemiah sneered. One of them wondered if the plucky city builder could put life into the rubbish heaps and make them stand up. Another suggested that any wall which Nehemiah could build would not hold up the weight of a fox. Such remarks no doubt made Nehemiah bleed, but he kept right on building.

Finding that laughter was useless and that frowns were in vain, Sanballat and his comrades resorted to force. Laughter is made of air and so also are jeers, and when it was seen that these could not conquer the determination of the brave builder, it was decided to use something more substantial, such as bows and arrows, spears and

swords. If words could not do the work, then it was supposed that metal would. They brought out all the warlike weapons in their possession. The Samaritans shook their spears, and the Ammonites flourished their arrows, and the Arabians flashed their swords, but the only effect which all this had on Nehemiah was to make him pray all the harder and to increase his watchfulness. From this time onward every man who worked on the walls had a sword at his side. The men who built Jerusalem watched as well as prayed.

Finding that Nehemiah could not be frightened by swords and spears, his enemies now adopted trickery. They began to lay traps. What cannot be done fairly is sometimes accomplished by fraud. What fails by honesty is often brought to pass by guile. Thus far Nehemiah's enemies have stood out in the light where they could be seen. They will now fight only in the dark. They have laughed in the light, and sneered in the light, and brandished their weapons in the light, they will now carry on their warfare out of sight. It is the foes we cannot see of which we have most reason to be afraid. A copperhead snake is not dangerous if you can see it. The trouble comes when you do not see it. It is the nature of a copperhead not to let you get your eyes on it. A runaway horse is not dangerous provided you see it in time. Nearly all our foes are harmless if we can only see them. It is the typhoid fever germ in the glass

of milk which you cannot possibly see that is more dangerous than a snake, and the tuberculosis bacillus floating in the air which is more to be feared than a hundred runaway horses. People are being killed every day by enemies they have never seen. Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem did not become really dangerous until they concealed their purposes, and began to try to capture Nehemiah by cunning.

The first trap was this. They sent him a polite invitation to come down into one of the villages on the plain of Ono and hold a conference. They simply wanted to talk things over. They wished to come to an understanding. Why should he not go? What is so innocent as talk? How could he be injured by talk? Ah, but what is so dangerous as talk? How many thousands have lost their lives through talk! Whether talk is wholesome or destructive depends on the place where you talk, and the persons with whom you talk, and the subject about which you talk, and the time at which you talk. If you talk at the wrong time, or on a wrong subject, or with bad people, or in a polluted place, then your talk may bring you to ruin. The invitation was a sugary one, and this was Nehemiah's immortal reply: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." His work held him up. He was too busy to come down. Talk would have interrupted the work. Talk would have left the city of God defenseless.

Sanballat was a man of perseverance. The enemies of God are always persistent. He sent Nehemiah a second invitation. Many a man has succumbed to a second invitation who was able to resist the first. Nehemiah repeated his first answer. A third invitation arrived, and again the same reply was returned. The request was repeated the fourth time, no doubt with still more sugar on the words. Possibly each time Sanballat suggested a village still nearer to Jerusalem, but to each request the answer came: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." All the villages were on the plain, and his place was on the wall. Any step no matter how short it was, would have been a downward one. He could not take it. His work held him up.

Baffled in this, a second trap was tried. Courteous invitations having failed, the enemy now tries threats. If this man cannot be coaxed, possibly he can be driven. If he cannot be allured, maybe he can be frightened. He is informed by Sanballat that a rumour is running up and down all that part of the world saying he is fortifying Jerusalem in order to rebel against the king, that Gashmu asserts this to be the truth, and that unless he stops his work immediately they are going to report him to Artaxerxes. It was a sly and intimidating threat. It was no light matter in those days to fall under the suspicion of a mighty king. Suspicion is frequently aroused by liars. When Gashmu sets

to work there is no telling what he may accomplish. Who this Gashmu was no one has ever been able to find out. Some have thought that there never was any such man, and others have guessed that this is only another name for Geshem. Gashmu—some think—is only Geshem in disguise. Gashmu is Geshem crushed out of shape so as to escape recognition. Whoever he was, he amounted to nothing. He was much such a bogey as our modern "They." You hear people saying "*They* say," "Did you know that *they* say," "I am afraid of what *they* will say." That is our modern way of referring to Gashmu. Geshem has frightened his thousands, but Gashmu his tens of thousands. A person who is afraid of what "they" will say can never have peace in this world. Many a boy and girl has been scared away from duty simply by what Gashmu says, and in this respect the men and women are often no better than the boys and girls. But the only effect that Gashmu had upon Nehemiah was to cause him to throw himself afresh upon God. When the enemies multiplied their plots, Nehemiah increased the earnestness of his prayers.

Outwitted at every point, Sanballat now tries one scheme more. He knows he cannot overcome Nehemiah from without: he will now strike him from within. He will work through men inside Jerusalem. He has failed in fighting Nehemiah face to face. He will now slip up on him from be-

hind. He will strike him in the dark and he will strike him in the back. He will make use of the two most influential classes in the city—the prophets and the nobles, the men who guard religion and the men of birth and culture and money. Shemaiah is the prophet who acts as Sanballat's tool. His scheme is sly. He shuts himself up in the temple, and asks Nehemiah to come in and stay with him. It is a good place, he will be in good company, and he will be hiding in a good cause. His life is exceedingly precious to the city. All will be lost if he should die. His enemies are bound to kill him. They will kill him some time in the night. For the sake of the city, then, Nehemiah ought to be prudent and hide himself behind the big, heavy temple doors. But the invitation was spurned. Nehemiah was not a man to run. He knew that a coward cannot be a leader, and that the man who shuts himself up to save his skin can never stand at the head of a great enterprise. A leader must be in the open. He must be willing to be shot at. It is his courage and example which make him mighty in the hearts of men, and if he shirks and hides he has lost his place. He might as well be dead. Nehemiah kept his place on the wall. Other prophets tried to ensnare him and failed. Even a prophetess tried it and failed. Tobiah will now work through some of the most influential of the nobles. He has married the daughter of a wealthy Jew, his son has married the

daughter of another Jew of light and leading, and so a vigorous correspondence is kept up between prominent men in Jerusalem and the leading enemies round about. Everything which Nehemiah says and does is swiftly reported to his foes, and everything that his foes say to discourage him is artfully whispered into his ears. But in spite of all the discouragements, the work goes steadily forward, and the result is announced in three great sentences which have in them the note of trumpets: "The wall was finished." "The enemies were cast down." "They saw that this was the work of God."

The story is a fascinating one because it is a vivid picture of the lot of man. It is a sketch of human life. It is an etching of the experience of the human heart. We are all Nehemiahs in the sense that we have a great work to do, and like him we have constant invitations to come down. We have all come from the court of the Artaxerxes of the Universe, and we all work under the protection of His power with materials which He Himself supplies. Our commission is to build up the walls of the city of God, and the particular piece of the wall which is given to each one of us to do, is to build a character after the pattern set for us in Jesus Christ. It is a great work and there are many hindrances and obstructions. We are surrounded by enemies on every side, and they are sly, ingenious and persevering. They laugh at

us, and if that fails to move us, they jeer at us, and if that does not conquer us, they threaten us with swords and spears. They lay traps for us. They send us courteous and pressing invitations. They send not one or two, but many. These are so plausible we sometimes accept them. If we refuse, our enemies threaten us. They tell us what Gashmu says, and predict our loss of favour with the king. If we are strong enough to resist all this, then they bribe forces within our own soul, the prophets and the nobles, the moral instincts and the princely powers, and use them as traitors to work our ruin. It takes the courage and strength of a Nehemiah to live life successfully, and it is worth while studying the method by which he stood and conquered.

His secret is expressed in the one sentence: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." We cannot accept invitations simply because they are from respectable people. Sanballat was a gentleman, a governor; Tobiah was a gentleman, a satrap; Geshem was a gentleman, a chief, but they were not interested in the building of the city of God. People of good reputation may be dangerous. The reputation may be good and the character may be bad. The social position may be high and the moral aim may be low. You cannot afford to gossip with Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem on the plain of Ono. You cannot afford to be talking when you ought to be studying, chat-

ting when you might be working. When Sanballat asks you to come down and have a good talk, say "I am doing a great work, I am getting an education, I am building up my mind, and I cannot come down." There are invitations to disobedience. Boys will ask you to disobey your father. Girls will coax you to pay no attention to the wishes of your mother, but the habit of obedience is an important piece of the wall of the city of God, and when the invitation from Sanballat arrives, it is for you to say: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down."

The threats must be met in the same manner. Sanballat will say, "If you do not come with us, Gashmu says you will be counted queer. If you do not do as we do, how can you be popular? When you are in Rome you must do as the Romans do. You might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion." The only reply to that is: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." Nehemiah seeks first not the honour of men, but the honour which comes from God only. They will ask you to lie. They will tell you, you cannot keep your position unless you lie, that you cannot make money unless you lie, that you cannot succeed unless you lie, and the best of all answers is: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." A man who tells lies comes down very low. It is better to make a life than a living, it is better to build a character than a fortune. It

may be some one will ask you to drink. The invitation will come from a gentleman, possibly from a lady. No young man is ever seized and the champagne poured down his throat. He is always invited in the most courteous manner possible, with the sweetest of smiles, and the gentlest of accents: "Won't you take a glass, just one, won't you drink with me?" That is a good time for you to say to yourself: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. I am building an example, so that I cannot do what you ask me to do." While you are saying that to yourself, you will hear a voice—the voice of Sanballat—saying, "You are secretly a rebel, you are an enemy of the king, you will lose your place at the court, society harbours no rebels, if you are going into society you must come down." It is then that it is time for you to pray.

But the fiercest attacks of all are those made on us from within. Shemaiah pleads with us to be prudent, and before we realize it we become cowards. He begs us to save ourself, and then of course it becomes impossible for us to save others. We keep with good company in a safe place, when we ought to be in a dangerous place where hard work is to be done. There are instincts within us ever ready to play the traitor. If some one cuts us with a sharp remark, we want to start at once for the plain of Ono and get even with him. If one does us an injury, there is something in us impel-

ling us to come down. We want an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. There are traitors inside the soul. There are no forces which must be watched with such constant vigilance as the instincts and impulses of one's own heart.

How did Nehemiah win his victory? His secret is written large across the book which bears his name. He believed in God. He was a man of prayer. Whenever the enemies made a fresh assault, he invoked anew the protection of the King of Heaven. When men laughed, he prayed. When they scowled he prayed again. When they threatened him with swords and spears, he prepared for battle, but he kept on praying, and he urged his workmen to hold fast to God. One of his prayers is especially suggestive: "O God, strengthen thou my hands!" It is a short prayer, but one of the most beautiful in the Scriptures. It is a good prayer for all boys and girls and for all men and women everywhere. "O God, strengthen thou my hands—make strong the working part of me—give me energy with which to do my task—increase my capacity for labour—add to my power as a worker—enlarge my usefulness as a builder on the walls!" Work is one of the best of all safeguards against the enemies of the soul. So long as a man works, Satan is baffled. It is when we are induced to come down from our work, that we are trapped and slain.

One cannot read the story of this fifth century

Jew without thinking of Jesus of Nazareth, the man who never came down. He came to earth to do a great work, the greatest work ever attempted here. Enemies rushed in on Him from every side. Sanballat and Tobiah and Geshem were after Him all the time. They laughed at Him. Their laugh was cynical and hard. They jeered at Him. They called Him a friend of publicans and sinners. They said He was crazy. They declared He had a devil. They longed to push Him over a precipice. They picked up stones in the streets to throw at Him. They tried to catch Him by guile. They did their best to trap Him by questions. They made repeated efforts to induce Him to say something foolish or do something unwise. Satan attempted to bribe the noblest instincts within Him. All was in vain. He was doing a great work and He would not come down. Friends and enemies alike urged Him to come down, but their invitations were all rejected. Hatred did everything in its power to tease Him into petulance, to nag Him into bitterness, but He refused to come down. Becoming sour is one way of coming down. Those who remain in their right place are always sweet. When they drove the nails through His hands and feet, He only said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His spirit was sweet to the end. They tried to break down His faith, but failed. Cities turned against Him. The crowd forsook Him. One of His own disciples became a traitor,

but His faith remained steadfast. His cause failed, but His soul remained triumphant. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." It was with this shout of triumph that He went to the cross. When we are despondent and despairful, we have come down. To surrender our faith or hope or love is to come down. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, the chief priests and scribes and elders taunted Him, saying, "Let him come down! Let him come down!" That was what the world had been saying to Him from the beginning. It came from many mouths, in many tones, with varying degrees of persuasiveness, and it came all along the way, but by His conduct Jesus kept saying: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." And so "God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

IV

THE TWO ROADS

"Enter ye in at the strait gate."—MATTHEW 7: 13.

MY subject is the Two Roads, and my text is, "Enter ye in at the strait gate." Before we go on, we must stop a minute and look at that word "strait." What sort of a gate is a strait gate? We know what a straight line is, but how many of us know what a strait gate is? It is a good rule for all boys and girls, and also for grown men and women, never to allow a word to pass until it has given up its meaning. Whenever you see a stranger word coming toward you whose meaning you do not know, the proper thing to do is to halt it, and compel it to tell you what it means. You remember how Jacob one night wrestled with an angel, and kept saying—"I will not let you go until you bless me!" That is the way you must wrestle with words. They are angels—or messengers—and you ought to take hold of them, and hold on to them, and never let them go until they give you their blessing. Their blessing is their meaning.

Now there are two words in our language which sound alike—strait and straight. They have the same sound, but not the same meaning. One is shorter than the other. The shorter one is Latin and means "pressed in," the longer one is Anglo-Saxon and means "stretched out." If a thing is "pressed in" it becomes strait, or as most of us would say narrow. When a piece of water is pressed in and connects two larger bodies of water we call it a strait. Africa and Europe squeeze in the western tip end of the Mediterranean, and we call the squeezed-in part of the Mediterranean the Strait of Gibraltar. We sometimes hear people say "I was in a strait," and what they mean is that they were in a tight place, circumstances had so pressed in upon them that they hardly knew what to do. That then is the meaning of strait in this sentence. It means narrow. The gate is pressed in. Indeed if you look into the Revised Version of your New Testament, you will find that the word strait has gone, and the word narrow has taken its place. Several years ago when a company of scholars went to work to make a new translation of the New Testament, they said to themselves, "Now many boys and girls do not know exactly what strait means, and we had better rub it out, and write down the word narrow." That is what they did. In the revised New Testament our text reads: "Enter in by the narrow gate."

The universe is built on a two road plan. Wherever we are and whoever we are, there are always two roads which run out from the spot on which we stand. This is true for every hour of every day of every week of every month of every year of our entire life. We are forever standing at the forking of the road. It is for us to decide which road we shall take. Whenever we open our mouth, there are two things we can say, and it is for us to select which one of the two it shall be. Whenever we make up our mind about anything, there are two ways in which it can be made up, and it is for us to decide what conclusion we shall reach. Life is thus a long series of choices. Our character is built up by decisions. What we are to-day is the product of our past choices. What we shall be in the end, will depend upon our decisions past and future.

Jesus gives us a description of these two roads. He calls one of them "broad" and the other one "narrow." He says one is to get on each of the roads through a gate. One gate is wide and the other is strait. Which one we go in by is left entirely with us. That is a matter which each one must decide for himself. It cannot be decided by one's parents, or teachers, or friends. It cannot be settled by policemen or congress or the President or King. Every one is left free to decide for himself by which gate he will go in, and along which road he will travel.

Since the matter is left to our own choice, Jesus gives us some earnest advice. He tells us that the narrow gate is the one to go in by. He advises us to take that. He does more than advise, He exhorts. He even urges and implores. He says it makes a deal of difference which gate we select, and that is why He is so anxious that we shall take the right one. St. Luke in his Gospel tells us that Jesus was in the habit of saying, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door." The word strive in English is a strong word, but it is not nearly so strong as the Greek word which lies under it. The Greek word is an athletic word, a word which athletes like and use. It means struggle, putting forth all one's energy, doing a thing with all one's strength. Jesus says to us—"Try with all your might to get through the narrow gate, for many will want to go through and will wish they could go through, but their wishing and hoping will not carry them through." To go through a gate which is narrow and to walk along a road which is straitened requires great exertion.

Why do you suppose Jesus thinks it is worth one's while to make such an effort to get through a gate that is narrow and to walk along a path which is straitened? He tells us it is because of the goal. The main thing about a road is where it takes you. A road may have many good qualities, but if it does not take you where you want to go, it is not a good road for you. It may be level and smooth

and solid, and be bordered with beautiful scenery, but if it runs in the wrong direction, it is not a road which you want. The Pennsylvania Railroad is a good road, but it is not good for me if I want to go to Boston. The Lehigh Valley Railroad is good, but not for me if I wish to go to Albany. Everything depends on where the road leads. If one of you boys were far from home, and you should ask a man which road to take, you would choose the road which would lead you home, no matter how narrow or hilly or stony it might be. If the man should say, "Look at this road, it is broad and level and smooth, I advise you to take it." You would ask, "But will it lead me home?" If he went on to describe the beautiful country through which it passed, you would ask again, "Will it lead me home?" If he kept on praising the qualities of the road, telling you how finely built it was and how much money it cost, you would say, "I do not care about any of those things, I want to know if the road will take me home!" And if the man should say, "No, it will not take you home. If you want to go home, you must follow that little crooked road, which runs over yonder hill. It is stony and steep, and I do not think you will like it," you would at once reply, "What does a boy care for the hills and the stones when he wants to go home?" This is why Jesus loves the road which is narrow, it leads us home. It leads us to life. It conducts us to God. He

wants us to live, and to live abundantly, and the only way into abundant life is through the gate which is narrow.

A few illustrations will make this all clear. Obedience is a narrow road, and disobedience is a broad one. If one is disobedient, he has plenty of room. He is independent. He can do as he pleases. He can go where he likes. He can act as he wills. He can obey sometimes and disobey sometimes. He can follow out all of his impulses and wishes. But if one is obedient, he must follow a path marked out by another. He cannot turn to the right or the left. He must submit his will to the will of his superior, and that means going through a gate which is narrow. There is no doubt that the broad road of disobedience has many delights. It is a pleasure to do what one pleases. But no one can claim that the broad road of disobedience leads to life. If all the boys and girls of a home do just as they please, then the life of that home is ruined. It is only when boys and girls obey their parents that the life of the home is established.

Attention is a narrow road, inattention is a broad one. The latter is far easier to travel than the first. It is not half so hard to think of fifty things in five minutes as to think of just one thing for five minutes. In school it is hard to fix the mind on the book and keep it there. The thoughts love to walk on a road that is broad. They are

eager to scamper off and run wild. They despise a gate that is narrow. Almost anything can coax them away, a slight sound, a chance happening, a passing trifle. It is easy to think of the boy or girl in front of you, or the girl or boy behind you, or of what you did yesterday, or of what you are going to do to-morrow. To think of all these things is to ramble down the road that is broad. But that road does not lead to intellectual life. That is not the way to build up the life of the brain. Men who live intellectually are obliged to go through a gate which is narrow, and to hold their mind upon a road which is straitened. David Livingstone when a little boy worked in a factory in Glasgow, and he was so eager to enter the kingdom of knowledge, that he placed a book on the spinning jenny, and took a glance at it as he passed to and fro in his work, paying no attention to all the clatter and confusion around him. It was thus that he passed into the kingdom of intellectual power, so that when he became a man and traveled in Central Africa, he could sit down in the midst of chattering and dancing savages and write learned articles without being at all disturbed by the sights or the sounds. By concentrating his thoughts he reached the dominions of victorious mental life. Down in New Jersey there is a wonderful man who is often called a wizard. He shuts himself up in his laboratory, and stays there for hours and sometimes days at a time, never allowing his mind

to move outside of those four walls, holding it steadily on just one thing, compelling it to go through a gate that is narrow. By traveling the straitened road, he has arrived at inventions which have lit up the world.

Conscientiousness is a narrow road, and indifference is a broad one. If you do not care for right and wrong, you are on a road which is exceedingly broad. You can speak the truth when you feel like it, and tell lies when they suit your purpose; you can steal when you are tempted, and can be honest when it is the best policy; you can be ugly and selfish and cruel, and again you can be gracious and kind and sweet. If one has no conscience, he can go through the world as he pleases. But the broad road of reckless living does not lead to life. Men without life in their conscience never accomplish anything great in this world. Down in Virginia there was a little boy once who wrote this in his copy-book: "Labour to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire—conscience." He did it, and he grew to be a man whom all men honoured, and honour still, and will honour forever—George Washington.

Helpfulness is a narrow road, while tearing things to pieces is a broad one. Any one can cut and slash with his tongue, and pour out words which sting and burn. It is not hard to speak what we think, and to blurt out the first idea which pops into our head. One can talk and talk and

talk forever. But that is not the road which leads to life. A reckless talker has no influence. People come at last to pay no attention to what he says. All his words are lighter than feathers. They make no impression on anybody's mind. The world shows its opinion of such people. It calls them babblers, gabblers, jabberers, and chatterboxes. The road which leads to a life that exerts influence over other lives is a narrow one. The tongue must travel a straitened road. It must weigh every word, and measure every sentence, and be accurate in every statement, for only then will people pay attention to what is being said.

Loafing is a broad road, and working is a narrow one. The loafer can sit down anywhere. He can sit on a bench in Central Park, and then move to a bench in Bryant Park, and then migrate to a bench in Battery Park, and then, if he has energy enough, he can flit to Van Cortlandt, or the Bronx Park. He can loiter in twenty different places in the course of a day. He has room. His road is exceeding broad. But that is not the road to usefulness. The useful man always walks a road that is narrow. The lawyer moves from his home to his office, and from his office to his home, day after day and year after year. His path is straitened. So is the path of the physician. He goes from his home to the sick room, from the sick room to his home, and this he repeats again and again and

again. By going through a gate which is narrow he arrives at a life rich in blessings.

Some one may say at this point: "But I do not like a narrow gate, and I find a narrow road very tame and disagreeable. I want to do what is pleasant. Nothing appeals to me but the agreeable." I am sorry to say that some parents listen to this objection, and surrender to it. They have the notion that their children must never be crossed. They must be allowed to do what they want to do. A child must be kept happy all the time. The idea has gotten out of the home into the school. There are educators who say that boys and girls ought to study only what they like to study, and that one of the chief aims in education is to make everything pleasant. It seems to me all this is a sad mistake. I believe that duty is a more sacred word than pleasure, and that we ought to do what it is our duty to do whether we like it or not, and that we ought to study what it is best in the long run for us to study, no matter how distasteful it is at the time. I fear that when the seed which is to-day being planted has brought forth its harvests, we shall have more shirks than we now have. By shirk I mean a man or woman who refuses to do his share of the work of the world. Now all work is not agreeable. Much of it is drudgery and repulsive. The work of emptying garbage cans is not pleasant, nor is the work of sweeping the streets. But it is work which must be done if the

world is to get on, and somebody is bound to do it. There are many kinds of disagreeable work to be done if civilization is to advance; and if social evils and corruptions are to be swept up and cast away, it is the duty of every man and every woman to do his share of this dreary and wearisome labour. Many a man is a shirk to-day, because he was never trained when a boy to face the things which are disagreeable, and to do the things which he did not like to do. Instead of a boy saying, "I don't like to do it and therefore I will not do it," he ought to say—"If it is my duty to do it, then I will do it whether I like it or not." Instead of saying—"It is unpleasant and therefore I will not do it," he ought to say, "It is unpleasant and therefore I am going to do it." There is nothing like the joy which fills the heart of a boy or a girl, or a man or a woman who performs a disagreeable work solely because he believes he ought to do it. The gate through which one passes to spiritual gladness is narrow.

It is a curious fact that the higher one wishes to climb in the kingdom of life, the narrower becomes the road which his feet must travel. The kingdoms of life and power are arranged one above the other, and the higher the kingdom the more narrow is the gate by which it must be entered. The highest heights are never reached except by paths that are rocky and steep.

I once saw an interesting sight at a great univer-

sity. A small group of students were seated at a dinner table, separated from all the others. I was asked to look at them, and the request was made in a tone of voice which indicated that these men were something wonderful. "Who are they?" I said, and the reply was, "They are the members of the football team." "And what are they doing there?" I asked, to which response was made, "They are not allowed to eat with the other students. They are forbidden to eat everything they please. They have a special diet prescribed by their trainers. They are compelled to eat and drink only what is given them, and they are even told when they must go to bed." In other words, these men were in search of physical strength and in order to reach it they were willing to travel a road that was narrow. They knew that only a narrow road leads to muscular vitality. If you wish superb life of the body you must go in by a gate that is narrow.

The same law which runs through the world of athletics runs through the life of business also. There is a man abroad who is known as a "jack of all trades." He can do a score of things, but no one of them with the skill of an expert. He travels a broad road. He can shovel coal, and wash windows, and sweep the pavement, and clean the furnace, and run errands, but his pay is small, and he is often out of work. It is the man who travels a narrow road whose pay is high, and who is al-

ways in demand. The man who has made a specialty of something, and who can do that one thing superbly, he is the man who reaches the lofty goal. He lives with a fullness which the jack of all trades never reaches.

Every artist finds that he who would enter the kingdom of art must pass through a narrow gate. If a woman desires to be a great singer, she must be content to walk along a straitened road. She cannot eat what she pleases, or take exercise only when she feels like it, or practice only when she is so disposed. There are many things she cannot eat, and many places she cannot go, and many pleasures she cannot enjoy, if she is to reach high life in the voice. She must keep practicing all the time. A renowned singer once said: "If I neglect my practice for a day, I see the difference in my execution; if for two days, my friends see it, and if for a week, all the world knows my failure."

But there is an art higher than the art of singing, and that is the art of living. Living is the most difficult of all the fine arts. Man is a wonderful creation, endowed with body and mind and spirit, and when he lives as he ought to live, all three are brought into subjection to the law of God. Man is created to live in God and for God. All his appetites and passions, all his impulses and inclinations, all his capacities and powers are to be brought into submission to the divine will. What

a work this is! Eternal life is the highest of all blessings, the divinest of all treasures, and this can be had only by those who go in by the gate that is narrow. An animal always insists upon a road that is broad. Should a tiger get loose in Broadway, he would demand the entire street. The sidewalks would be too small for him. Even one street would be insufficient. He would need several streets. It is the nature of animals to use the road that is broad. When a man puts an enemy into his mouth which steals away his brains, he drops to the animal level, and demands more room than ten normal men. When the crowd sees a drunkard coming, it makes room for him. He staggers from house to curbing and back to house again, and then to curbing once more, and possibly into the gutter. A drunkard is on the broad road. He is on the road to death. A man in his right mind walks down the street, needing only a narrow strip of sidewalk. He knows where he is going, he has a definite piece of work to do, he has no time to lose, and so he moves forward along a narrow way.

The men who have climbed the highest in this world have all passed through the narrow gate. Did you ever wonder why Paul usually signs himself: "Paul the slave of Jesus Christ"? Was it because he felt himself degraded? The word slave to us has something degrading about it. We think of a negro, ignorant, superstitious, probably vi-

cious, and we are surprised that Paul should call himself a slave. But slavery in Paul's day was not like the African slavery of the last century. Men captured in war were in the olden times either killed or made slaves. The poorest were killed, the best were saved and converted into slaves. These slaves were often the very finest of men, capable, talented, cultivated, fully the equal of their masters, and sometimes superior to them. But slavery always meant one thing, and that was that the slave was in absolute subjection to his master. He was bound to do his master's will. When Paul calls himself the slave of Jesus, he is thinking of the authority of his Master and the completeness of his own subjection to Him. He has no ambition to do anything but what Christ will have him do. He used to say: "For me to live is Christ. I belong to Him. I have His mark branded on my body. This one thing I do, I pay no attention to the spectators on the right or the left, and I even forget the things which lie behind me, while I press forward, always striving to become the kind of man which Christ wants me to be." Paul won the victory because he kept his feet on the road that was narrow.

He learned the secret from Jesus. Jesus never urged men to do what He refused to do Himself. He lived what He preached. Men did their best to persuade Him to walk on a road that was broad, but He always refused. They coaxed Him to go to

the right or to go to the left, but He never would. His reply was, "My hour is not yet come." One day He cried out: "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished." There was only one thing which it was possible for Him to do, and that was to do the will of His Father. And so He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. It was a horrible place to go. He knew what He was going for. He was going to be killed. He was going to taste death for every man. He was going to lay down His life not only for His friends, but also for His enemies. By a narrow gate He entered heaven. His word to us is: "Follow me!"

V

THE TONGUE

"The tongue is a fire."—JAMES 3:6.

THE tongue is a part of our body. It is a small part. Compared with an arm or a leg it is tiny; it is not so large as the hand or the foot. It is also flabby and weak.

It is not at all beautiful. It is not intended to be looked at. It is carefully hidden away in the mouth, and two rows of teeth are set in front of it, and over the teeth are drawn curtains of flesh to make sure that the tongue shall not be seen. The physician is the only man in the town who ever asks the privilege of looking at it.

But it is wonderfully important. We could not get on well without it. We make use of it every day, and almost every hour of the day. The soul employs it in doing its most important business. The feet do valuable work, they carry us from place to place. But their work is rather simple and mechanical, a sort of rough drudgery. The work which the hands do is more difficult and artistic. Hand work requires more or less attention of the mind. But the work which the tongue does is the most delicate and noble of all. The tongue works with words. Words are the coins with

which we carry on our intellectual business. The tongue deals with thoughts and feelings, with ideas and ideals, with mental pictures and heart melodies. Man is the only creature who can be said to have a tongue. He only is master of articulate speech.

Learning to talk, therefore, is a great achievement. It is a notable day in the life of a child when he speaks his first word. His father and mother listen for it long before it comes, and wait for it with impatience. When at last it is spoken their hearts thrill with rapture and they write the word down carefully in a book, and then wait for the second word, the third, and the fourth. Some day the child speaks a whole sentence, and this sentence is treasured as remarkable. It also is written in a book, and is read again and again with solemn gladness. The sayings of little children are the most original and interesting things in this world. Parents ponder them in their hearts, and repeat them to their neighbours, and now and then some of them find their way into the papers. It is a great day when a child takes his first step with his foot, it is a greater day when he takes his first step with his tongue. It is a red-letter day when he walks for the first time across the room, it is a still more famous day when he walks for the first time through a sentence. No matter how many wonderful things we may do in this world, we never do anything more wonderful than we do be-

fore we are six years old. In those first six years, we learn the art of talking. The mastery of words is probably the most amazing achievement of the human soul.

And now that you boys and girls have learned how to talk, I want to tell you some things about your tongue. It is not enough to know how to talk; you must know how to talk well. It is not enough simply to use your tongue; you must use it in obedience to the law of God. There are sins of the tongue, many and dangerous, and one of the books in the New Testament was written for the express purpose of warning people against them. This book is the letter of James. It is out of this letter I have taken the sentence which I wish to write upon your minds, "The tongue is a fire."

Whenever James looked out across the world, he noticed that a large part of all the trouble in it was caused by the tongue. This led him to think much and soberly about the tongue, and the longer he thought about it, the more wonderful to him the tongue became. He was impressed by the smallness of it, and how, though small, it seems to be able to control the whole body. This led him to think of other little things which in spite of their littleness are mighty. He thought of the bridle of a horse. The horse is big, and his bridle is small, and yet by means of the bridle, a man can turn a horse to the right or to the left, indeed he can turn the big body of the horse completely round, and set

the animal to moving in a direction directly opposite to that in which he had started out.

Next James thought of the rudder of a ship. The ship is big and the rudder is small, and yet the steersman by means of the rudder can turn the ship in whatsoever direction he pleases, and that, too, even when the wind is blowing. The wind is mighty and the ship is big, but the little rudder is more than a match for them both. After he has thought of the bridle and the rudder, he comes back to think again about the tongue. He thinks about the power of it, and when he thinks of this it reminds him of fire. He exclaims, "The tongue is a fire!" Fire is, as you know, one of the mightiest forces of nature. When it once gets agoing, it is difficult to check it. Men have been working for years to devise ways of holding it in control. Sometimes whole cities and vast forests are burnt up, in spite of all that men can do.

A big fire always comes out of a little one. A forest fire often comes out of a campers' fire, a little fire kindled for the purpose of boiling a cup of coffee. The campers' fire comes out of a match, out of a speck of phosphorous on the end of a splinter. One of the campers carried the match in his pocket. He kindled a few dry leaves with it, and the leaves kindled a few dry twigs, and by and by great trees were burning, and at the end of the day the whole mountain side was a mass of flame. "How much wood is kindled," cries the Apostle

in astonishment, "by how small a fire!" And then he goes on to say, "the tongue is a fire." It is little, but it is mighty in its inflaming power. It can kindle a soul, and that soul can kindle another soul, and that other can kindle still others, until the whole world is blazing. There is hardly a limit which you can set to the mischief which may be caused by one tongue.

From this point he went on to think of the good which the tongue can do. It is capable of enormous evil: it is also capable of vast good. Uncontrolled, it works havoc: but held in check it does the works of God. The tongue can bless our Father in heaven. It can express adoration, and gratitude, and love. It can speak the brightest things which the mind can think, and the holiest feelings which the heart can feel. It can ascend into heaven and take part in the worship there. And it can also curse. It can blight, and blast, and kill. It can express bitterness, and scorn, and hate. The worst things which the mind can think and the basest things which the heart can feel can all be told by the tongue. The tongue can go down into hell, and revel in the work of demons.

And so the Apostle comes to the conclusion that one of the first and most important tasks to which a person must set himself is the management of the tongue. He goes so far as to say that if a man can manage his tongue he has a right to consider himself full-grown. It is a beautiful sign of ma-

turity this mastery of the tongue. It is an index of character. He begins his letter with an earnest exhortation—"Be slow to speak!" and does not hesitate to say that if a man is not able to bridle his tongue, then no matter how religious he claims to be, his religion does not amount to anything.

It is high time, then, that all of us were thinking seriously about our tongue, and asking ourselves how we are using it. Let us try to find out to-day into how many sins of the tongue mentioned in the Bible we have already fallen.

Let us think about a few of the most common of these sins.

You have all heard of a loose tongue, a tongue "loose at both ends." Of course no tongue can be loose at both ends, but some tongues wag so easily and so constantly, that we say of them, they are loose at both ends. It is sometimes said of a person, his tongue runs away with him. This also is a figure of speech. You have probably seen a horse, some time, run away with a man. It is a terrifying sight. The horse became frightened, and driven by fear, he became unmanageable, and the poor driver could no longer hold him, and so the horse ran headlong down the street, endangering not only the life of the driver but also the lives of others. There are many persons who are run away with by their tongue. Their tongue is headstrong, unmanageable, and it goes dashing furiously on, smashing prudence, and good sense, and

truth along the way, and jeopardizing the reputation not only of the person who is talking, but also of others.

It is a sign of weakness when grown folks talk too much. They are lacking in the power of self-control. Talkativeness is a sort of nervousness. When people have weak nerves, they are fidgety, always rubbing their hands, or drumming with their fingers, or tapping with their toes. They would not do these things if they were not weak. Sometimes this weakness shows itself in the tongue. It runs on and on, and there is no such thing as stopping it. Such persons have little influence. And moreover they are a great bore. Everybody dreads and shuns a grown-up chatterer.

Boys and girls often talk too much. They talk in the wrong places and at the wrong times. There is a time to speak, and there is also a time to keep still, and some young people do not seem to be able to find the times of silence. It is possible to talk too much at home. You can wear your mother out by your talking. A chatterbox is hard on the nerves. All boys and girls ought to study arithmetic and grammar, and how to be quiet. Holding the tongue is a fine art. You ought to master it.

A loose tongue is a great nuisance in a school. How can one study if his tongue is impatient to wag? It is impossible to listen to what the book says, if one's tongue is wild to say something.

Whisperers in study hours hurt not only themselves but others. The tongue gets in the way of the mind and the mind cannot do its work. If you cannot keep still long enough to learn your lesson, it is because you are weak.

Some children talk even in church. When they ought to be singing the hymn, they are whispering, when they ought to be listening to the reading of the Bible, they are thinking up something new to say. They disturb the worship of all around them by their talking. If you would listen to the Apostle James he would tell you to bridle your tongue. He would say "Be slow to speak." It is a bad sign when any person either old or young feels that he must immediately blurt out every idea which pops into his head. Keep your ideas until the time comes when it is proper to speak them. The church is no place for whispering.

There is such a thing as an idle tongue. An idle tongue is not one which says nothing, but it says a lot of things which amount to nothing. Some of the idlest people in the world are the busiest. They go through many motions, but the motions accomplish nothing worth while. What is the use of talking when you have nothing worth saying? There are many idle talkers of all ages in the world. They talk about petty subjects. They chatter about trifles. They fill their conversation with sticks and straws. They prattle about aches and pains, just as though aches and pains were

things to talk about. They babble about slights and insults, most of them imaginary, and even when real not worth talking about. They twitter about insignificant happenings, trifling episodes, trivial topics. They speak an infinite deal of nothing.

Sometimes the subjects are large enough, but the remarks are trashy and cheap. It is never wise to talk much or confidently on subjects beyond us. We never know much about any subject unless we study it, and all large and intricate subjects must be studied and thought about for years. And yet many persons do not hesitate to speak on every subject, and the more complicated and difficult it is the more likely such persons are to speak with the air of omniscience and to scoff at the opinions of those who have studied the subject for years, if those opinions differ from their own. There is a vast deal of idle talking in our country. Thousands speak without knowledge. We are pestered by reformers who do not know what they are talking about. The newspapers beguile us into discussing every conceivable problem, and airing our opinions on every imaginable theme. There is a deluge of idle talk rolling across the land. If it be true that for every idle word we must render account in the judgment day, then we have reason to tremble.

Beware of the idle tongue. Beware of the gift of gab. Boys and girls should not fall into the

habit of gabbling about subjects of which they know nothing. They should listen. They should pay attention. They should study. By and by it will come your time to speak.

In the list of evil tongues we must make a place for the tongue which may properly be labeled mischievous. It differs from the idle tongue in that it delights in mischief. It exults in the making of trouble. It tattles. It bears tales. It repeats gossip which has poison in it. It rehearses stories which hurt. It recites tales which have a sting. Sometimes it is not careful to repeat the story just as it has come. A little is added to it, or something is dropped out of it. The complexion of it is altered. By this alteration, fresh mischief will result. Such a tongue laughs at the prospect of harm. It delights in stirring up commotion, just as a bad boy loves the excitement which comes as the result of tying a tin can to a dog's tail.

No one is under bonds to repeat everything he hears, even to his most intimate friends, although this is a fact which is not generally understood. Many persons feel that it is their duty to pass on everything which comes to them. Whatever they hear, that they must speak. What comes in at the ear must go out at the mouth. All such persons are mischief makers. Many things should never be passed on. What would be gained by passing them on? Why waste time in passing them on? Why run the risk of creating fresh trouble by pass-

ing them on? Every one should own a cemetery in which he buries things which he hears and are not worth passing on. Damaging reports, foolish accusations, idle conjectures, scandalous gossip, bury them as fast as they arrive. By the time you are fifty you will have a cemetery larger than Woodlawn.

We must not forget the false tongue, the tongue that tells lies. A wise man long ago declared that he knew of at least six things which God hates, and that one of the six is a lying tongue. That man was right. The noblest men have always echoed the Hebrew poet's words " I hate and abhor lying." But while with our spirit we may abhor lying, the tongue may have an inclination to tell falsehoods. It is necessary therefore to train the tongue to speak the truth. It is not easy at all times to speak the truth, and only those learn how to do it who make an effort. The effort must be serious and continuous, and if at first one does not succeed then he must try again. It is a terrible misfortune to carry about with one a lying tongue. A whipping may hurt for a few minutes, but the hurt is soon over, and one can leave it behind. But a false tongue goes with us, and whoever has a false tongue in his mouth has something of which he must be ashamed. It is disgraceful to tell a lie. Better accept any punishment than tell a falsehood. If you let your tongue tell one lie, it will want to tell another, and then another, and by and by it will

not know how to speak the truth. No liar inherits the Kingdom of God.

One other evil tongue must be named—a cruel tongue. There is a tongue which hurts people. It cuts like a knife. It pierces like a dagger. It torments, it tortures, it kills. If there is one unkind tongue in a family, then that family has a severe affliction. One unkind tongue in a home can poison the whole life of that home. One hateful tongue in a church can do more damage than can be measured. One tongue set on fire by hell can set a whole community ablaze. It is the cruel tongue which the Apostle had in his mind when he called the tongue a fire. It can burn up the peace of households, and the sacred ties of friendship, and the mutual confidence of neighbours, and even the good will of nations. Unkind words rankle in the heart, and cause an inflammation of the blood. Reckless words cut like swords, and ungenerous words leave wounds which may never heal. Pray God to be saved from the calamity of possessing a cruel tongue!

Have you ever examined the ten Commandments to find out how many of them you can break by the tongue? The third can surely be broken by it. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." When a boy or girl breaks the third Commandment, he does it by his tongue. The fifth Commandment is often broken by the tongue. "Honour thy father and thy mother;"

a child does not honour his parents when he has an impudent or insolent tongue. Even the sixth Commandment can be broken by the tongue. One can kill the heart by cruel words. More than one person has died from the wounds inflicted by a murderous tongue. Both the eighth and ninth Commandments are broken by the tongue. We cannot steal money with the tongue, but we can steal a man's reputation, and that is more valuable than gold.

"Who steals my purse, steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name,
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

We can bear false witness against our neighbour, either through ignorance or from malice, and we do this with the tongue. Half the decalogue can be desecrated by the tongue. Take heed to your ways, that you sin not with your tongue!

Here, then, are five things to be remembered:

First, words are deeds. You do things with your tongue. You do more things with your tongue than you do with your hands. You can see what you do with your hands but you cannot see what all you do with your tongue. When a word goes forth it keeps working, and being like

fire, it spreads, and not until you reach the world where all things are known will you ever know what you have done with your tongue.

Second. You are responsible for your words. You are not responsible for all you think. Satan can shoot evil thoughts into your mind. You are not responsible for all you hear. The ears take in what is said in their presence. They have no means of self-protection. But you are responsible for all you say. The tongue does not repeat what is heard, or what is thought, unless the soul issues a permit. And so our Lord says—"By your words you shall be justified and by your words you shall be condemned."

Third. One of the greatest tasks in life is the education of the tongue. It must be sent to school —the school of Christ. It must be disciplined, and trained. It must be held in vigorous subjection. You must make yourself the master of it. It is not an easy thing to do, and you will have to work at it more or less all your life. Begin to-day.

Fourth. You cannot succeed no matter how hard or long you work without the help of God. You must watch and you must pray. Unless you watch, bad and foolish words will drop out of your mouth before you know it, and when once out you never can get them back again. If your dog gets out into the street you can get him again. If your bird gets out, you may not get him, for he may fly into a high tree, but you may possibly catch him.

But if a word gets out, it flies into another world—the world of the mind—and you never can get it back again! Watch, therefore, and pray to God that He will help you day by day to train your tongue to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly before Him.

Fifth. It is with your tongue that you can do most of your finest work for God. With your tongue you can teach, and admonish and encourage, and console. With your words you can put out fires which might consume the happiness of many homes. With your words you can turn away wrath, and reconcile enemies, and extend the kingdom of kindness and good will. With your words you can strengthen faith, and brighten hope, and deepen love. Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good with His tongue. With His words He instructed, and strengthened and cheered. The world was made better by the things which He said. His words were spirit: they were life. One day He declared: "Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away."

Nineteen centuries have come and gone and through all these centuries the words of Jesus have been at work, creating a new soul under the ribs of nations, and filling the world with miracles of grace. Those words are working still, and will continue to work forever. He blessed humanity with His tongue, and He says to us every one—"Follow Me!"

VI

THE IMPORTANCE OF LITTLE THINGS

"He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much."—LUKE 16: 10.

EVERYBODY is interested in big things. People like to think about them and talk about them; the Panama Canal, the San Francisco Exposition, the European War. The newspapers are always calling our attention to big things, big railway accidents and big business failures, big discoveries and big gifts, big business and big scandals, big crimes and big tragedies, and while the world goes on talking about big things, I want to think with you for a little while about the importance of little things.

For the world is made up of little things. Did you ever pull the summer to pieces? Try it, and see what you find. You will find a lot of little grass blades, little plants, little flowers, little leaves, little blossoms, little perfumes, little bird-notes, little gurglings of running water, little lights and shadows—that is all the summer is. God builds the summer palace out of little things.

Life is made up of little things. Our life con-

sists of days, and the days are composed of minutes, and minutes are little things. We never have more than one of them at a time. Did you ever think what you would do if you could have two minutes at the same time? Just one minute at a time is God's law and the law can never be changed. The minutes are filled with little things. You get up in the morning, wash, dress, eat breakfast, go to your work, it may be in school or in office or in shop or in home, you succeed in doing a dozen or two dozen things, all of them little, and then you are hungry and must eat again. You then go back to your work, and after you have attended to a dozen or two dozen little things, it is time for dinner, and after dinner you read a little, or talk a little, or amuse yourself a little, and then you are tired and sleepy and must go to bed again. The days are packed full of little things. Which one of us ever does a big thing? We have no time.

I saw a little girl one day painting a little picture. She had a little brush and a dozen little cakes of paint, and a little card, and she was painting the picture of a little house and a little tree near the house. We are all painting little pictures. God gives to each one of us a little piece of time, and on that we have to paint. Everything depends on the way we use our little brush. We can make our picture a hideous daub, or we can make it a beautiful work of art. Whether we make it a daub or a

masterpiece depends on the attention we pay to little things.

Our feelings are coloured by little things. You get up some morning feeling well and happy. The birds are singing and the sun is singing, he sings by shining, and all the world glistens and glows, and before noon you are crying. Tears are flowing out of your eyes, and you take no delight in the light of the sun and you are so wretched you do not know what to do, all because there is a little speck of something not nearly so large as the head of a pin in one of your eyes. A little piece of a cinder in one eye is sufficient to blot out the light of the sun, and to change the colour of a whole day. You go to bed some night and a little mouse comes out and begins to nibble something about ten feet from your bed. He is a little creature with very small teeth, and he makes only a little noise, not half so much noise as an automobile, not a thousandth part as much as an elevated train, and yet that little noise made by that little mouse is more annoying than all of the big noises of the street, and you cannot go to sleep no matter how hard you try. A cat can chase away a mouse, but a mouse can do something more wonderful still, it can chase away the angel of sleep.

You are feeling quite happy one day, and all at once somebody makes a remark about you. It drops off of somebody's lips, and sinks down into your heart, and suddenly your whole life is

changed. Your feelings were flowing onward as beautifully clear as a mountain brook, and all at once the stream became muddied by the dropping into it of an unkind remark. One bitter or unjust word is enough to discolour the life of a whole day.

But if our feelings can be made dismal and dark by little things, they can be made jubilant and bright by little things. It is sometimes said that it does not take much to make a child happy. The fact is that it does not take much to make any of us happy. Just a few little things: A little box on Christmas morning, nicely done up in paper, tied with a ribbon, and your name written on it. A little thing like that makes anybody's heart beat fast. Christmas is made the merriest day in all the year by the giving and receiving of a lot of little things. And every day in the year would be flooded with sunshine if we only had enough of the necessary little things, such as smiles, and loving words and caresses, and encouragements and praises. This then is a wonderful fact: You can shear off the glory of the sun by a pair of scissors made of little things, and you can add to the brightness of the sun, lifting its brilliancy to a higher pitch of glory, by putting together a certain number of little words and little deeds.

Now if our happiness depends largely on little things, then we may be quite certain that the happiness of other people depends on little things also.

If we are hurt or helped by what they do, then they are helped or hurt by what we do. For instance, if you go to a lecture, or a concert, or to a religious service, and whisper to the person nearest to you while the singer is singing or the speaker is speaking, you are certain to hurt somebody's feelings. Even a nice little modest whisper can be heard ten feet in all directions, so that it disturbs all the people seated in a circle whose diameter is twenty feet. What is a whisper? It is the shaving of a sound, it is the splinter of a tone, and it gets into somebody's ear. Nobody can see with a splinter in his eye: nobody can hear with a splinter in his ear. Make it a rule, then, never to whisper when a speaker is speaking, or when singers are singing. It is a piece of bad manners, it is an evidence of low breeding, it is an exhibition of inexcusable thoughtlessness and selfishness no matter who is guilty of it, provided he has passed out of the age of babyhood.

It is possible to hurt other people's eyes. If when you walk through the street, or through any of our city parks, you throw down pieces of paper or peanut shells, or bits of orange peeling, you are wounding the eyes of you do not know how many people. Just a few scraps of paper will spoil the beauty of a whole lawn, and a street littered with trash is an offense to the eye. New York is a big house in which all of us are living, and we ought to be very careful what we throw on the floor.

We all feel happier when we live in a house which is clean.

The happiness of a home is built on little things. When a home becomes shabby and unpleasant it is because little things are not carefully attended to. Even the beauty of the dinner table depends on the attention which is given to little things. What spoils a table-cloth? A little spot here and there. What spoils a napkin? A little hole in it. What spoils a plate? A piece chipped out of it. What spoils a knife? A nick in the blade of it. The enjoyment of a dinner can be spoiled by a failure to look after little things. Some homes are neat and others are not. How can any home be neat if boys and girls do not close the door when it ought to be closed, and push in the drawer when they have taken out of it what they want, and hang up their clothes where they belong, and put back the books into their place when they have finished using them? Neatness is a form of beauty to be gotten only by attending to little things.

Some homes are happy and others are not happy. If you look into the life of unhappy homes, you will find that the trouble usually comes from a lack of attention to little things. Little courtesies have been forgotten and little misunderstandings have been allowed to grow, and little sacrifices have not been made, and little faults have not been corrected, and by and by the home is completely ruined. Little disobediences cause no end of trou-

ble. You are told to do this, and you do not do it. You are told not to go there, and you go. The result is unhappiness both for you and your parents. Little quarrels even when they are so small that we call them spats, are big enough to spoil a whole day and even a week. What do children quarrel about? Oh, about some little insignificant thing—some trifle, something that does not amount to anything whatever. And what do grown people quarrel about? Nearly always about some little thing that is not worth troubling oneself about at all. Many a home has gone all to pieces because the members of it persisted in quarreling about little things. Just a little discord will spoil the finest piece of music. If one of the keys of our big church organ misbehaves, if it says, "I propose to make what tone I please, and I am going to make it just when I choose," then the whole musical service is spoiled. The organist cannot play the glorious compositions of the masters, and the singers cannot sing, if one key becomes lawless and refuses to work harmoniously with all the other keys. And so can one member of the family, one little boy, one little girl, spoil the melody of the whole home, and make it impossible for God to get from that family the music which He wanted to give to the world. Just as God makes the summer by weaving together little perfumes and blossoms and bird-notes, so can human beings make a home which resembles heaven by weaving together a great

number of little courtesies, thoughtfulnesses, obediences, and sacrifices.

Character is made beautiful by the faithful doing of little things. Everything is of importance, no matter how little it looks, in the building of a soul that is to live with God forever. Many a man has made shipwreck of his life because he did not go to work in time to curb a habit that was wrong. It was just a little habit which he supposed he could get rid of almost any time he chose, but all habits have this in common, they grow in strength all the time, so that no matter how small they are at the beginning, they become in time strong enough, if allowed to grow, to overcome us. I saw a man lying one evening in the street. He could not get up. He was a big strong man, but he could not get up. He was in good health. No bones were broken. But he could not get up. He was drunk. He did not want to get drunk. But when he was a boy he had a weakness, a little weakness. It did not amount to much. His weakness was to yield too readily to the wishes of others. When other boys wanted him to do a thing he did it, not because he wanted to do it, or because he thought it right to do it, but because they asked him to do it. When they asked him to take a drink of wine he did it. He had been warned not to do it, but what harm, he said, can come from drinking just a little. And so he drank a little, never very much, never enough to hurt him, never enough to make him drunk, and

finding that it was perfectly safe to drink a little, he drank a little more, not much more, just a little more, and finding how safe this was, he drank a little more, and then a little more, and then a little more, and all at once he discovered that he could not stop. And so I saw him lying helpless, pitiable, wretched in the street! That is the way all drunkards are made. They all begin by drinking just a drop. And that is the way all big sinners are made. They begin by going wrong just a little. They never take more than one step at a time. How are big liars made? They all begin as little liars. They tell things which are not quite true. They are almost true, but not altogether true. Many persons feel they have a right to depart a little from the truth. If it is convenient it is right. They can add just a little, they can subtract just a trifle. It is not necessary, they think, to be absolutely accurate in what they say, and so they grow more and more careless in their statements, until at last nobody can place any reliance on anything they say. The big thieves are only little thieves grown up. If you take a five-cent piece which does not belong to you, you have not stolen much. It is just a little piece of metal, you cannot buy much with it, the person you stole it from will never miss it, but it is large enough to test whether you are honest or not. If a grocer gives you five cents too much in change, and you do not give it back, then you are dishonest, just as

truly dishonest as if you stole a man's watch. If you will steal five cents when you get a chance, the probability is that you will steal a thousand dollars if you ever get a chance. Many persons would steal if they only had a good chance. If it were safe to do it, if they were sure they would never be found out, they would steal. They have never stolen more than a few cents now and then because they have never had a good chance. We number them among the honest people, but God classes them with the rogues.

There is something even smaller in importance—so many people think—than speaking the truth or being honest in the use of money, and that is being careful in the use of time. I have read somewhere that Charles Darwin, the famous scientist, when he was a boy ran a mile one day to school, praying all the way that he might not be late. To him it seemed an awful sin to arrive at school too late. And this sense of the value of punctuality he never lost. He was one of the greatest workers of the nineteenth century, and his golden motto was "Take care of the minutes." Does it make any difference whether you get to school five minutes before the hour or five minutes after? It certainly makes a great difference to the school, for the school cannot have any helpful opening exercises if twenty or fifty or a hundred boys and girls come straggling in late. Does it make any difference whether you get to church five minutes before the

hour or five minutes after? It certainly makes a difference to the church, for if you come in late, you trample on the service, you mar the worship of those who have come on time. It makes also a great difference to you, because if you habitually arrive at church late, you are building up a habit of procrastination, of a slovenly use of time, of a carelessness of the comfort of other people which is a serious blot on your character. There are people who go through life, from five to ten minutes late to everything, to the church service, to the theater, to the opera, to the lecture, to the committee meeting, making a great nuisance of themselves by stealing the time and comfort of others.

And then there are little religious duties which have to be attended to every day. A prayer is a little thing. You can say the Lord's Prayer in a minute. You can say "Now I lay me down to sleep" in less than a minute. You can speak to God about all you have done through the day in a very little time. A prayer of one person is so small it hardly seems of great importance either to God or to mankind. It is only a little ceremony that can be brushed aside, if one is tired, or if one is busy, or if one has other things on his mind. This is what many persons think. A boy or girl might say: "I am so very small, and there are so many millions of boys and girls in the world, that I do not think God will notice it if I do not pray to-night." But if you think that you are mistaken.

Jesus says that not one little bird can disappear from the air without God noting its disappearance, and do you suppose one little child could be missing in the great company assembled for evening prayer without his eyes observing the vacant place? Jesus says that the very hairs of your head are all numbered, and if that be true, you may be certain that your prayers are also numbered. A prayer is indeed a little thing, but it is a link in the golden chain, as a great poet has told us, by which this old world of ours is bound around the feet of God.

There is a little voice which you must listen to every day. It is such a little voice that there is danger of it being drowned in the thunder and uproar of a great city. It is the most wonderful voice in New York. It sounds down deep in the soul of every human being. It speaks so distinctly, and so emphatically, and so repeatedly, that no one can possibly misunderstand what it says. I mean the little voice of conscience. The voice that says always—" You must do right. You must do right. You must do right," and which sometimes says to us " You did wrong. You did wrong. You did wrong," until we are so unhappy we hardly know what to do. This is a voice which you must always listen to. If you do not pay attention to it, it will grow fainter and fainter, until at last it may be impossible for you to hear it at all. If you listen to this tiny voice every day of your life, you will be certain to be faithful in that which is little.

The New Testament tells us that Jesus always noticed little things. He liked the little flowers which blossomed at His feet, and one day He declared that the most glorious king He had ever heard about had never had in his royal robes colours so splendid as those which shone in these little flowers. He was fond of the little birds, and asked the people to look at them, and learn lessons from them. One day He drew a sermon from a grain of mustard seed, a sermon of encouragement and cheer. A mustard seed, you know, is very small, and yet it is astonishing what comes out of it. So it is astonishing what can come out of the human soul if the soul is only true to the law of its life. Once a woman touched Jesus in the crowd. He noticed immediately the touch. Even so little a thing as a touch is of vast importance in a world like this. On one occasion He noticed a poor woman dropping two little bits of copper into the contribution box. Nobody else saw the copper, indeed nobody else saw the woman herself. She was nothing but a poor, obscure, peasant woman, and all the money she had was two tiny bits of copper, and yet Jesus saw her, and He saw her money, and He saw her great generous heart, and wherever the name of Jesus is preached the beautiful deed of this poor woman is mentioned with praise. It is not necessary to have much money to be generous. It is easier to be generous if you have only a dollar than if you have a million dol-

lars. Few men can have a million dollars, but all of us can be generous, and the poorest of us can be more generous than the richest man in the world. He that gives a little out of his little gives more than he who gives a good deal out of his abundance.

Jesus noticed little children even when big folks got in between Him and them. One time His disciples did their best to keep little boys and girls away from Him. They had the same opinion that many grown people have nowadays, they supposed that because children could not understand what Jesus was saying, it was useless for Him to devote any time to them. But He was pained by their stupidity, and told them that they were mistaken. He asked them to stand out of the way, and let the children come not because He had anything to teach them, but because they had something to teach grown folks. A baby is a little thing, but what other thing in all this world is so mighty in quickening the mind, softening and expanding the heart, and brightening and bracing the spirit. If there were no babies in the world mankind would be without gladness and without hope.

Jesus says that we are going to be examined by and by as to the way we have attended to little things. Words are little things. Can you think of anything smaller than a word? You can pour two hundred of them out of your mouth in a minute. God takes account of all these words. Jesus

says you are going to get a good mark or a bad mark just according to the kind of words you have spoken.

God looks also at the things we do, not simply at the big things, the important things, the things that we think are quite wonderful and that people praise us for. Jesus says that even little acts are noticed in heaven, and that things which no one would think of praising here are applauded by the angels of God. If you do any little deed of kindness, no matter how small it is, your deed is noticed in heaven. If you give a cup of water to a person who is thirsty, because you are sorry for him and want to help him along the way, the very heavens open and a blessing comes down to you from God.

God seems to take special delight in rewarding people who are willing to do little things which He wants done. The man who had a pound given him and who used it well, must have been greatly surprised when he learned that, as a reward of his fidelity, he was to be the ruler of ten cities. He had lived his life in a narrow circle, and had done his work on a small scale, but he had done it so well that God was delighted with him, and gave him authority over ten cities. In his humble little sphere he proved what was in him, and so God promoted him to a high and glorious position.

Jesus says that when men stand before God on the judgment day, many of them will be amazed

to find how much they have done. When they are invited to come into heaven they will say, "What have we ever done to merit all this?" and then Jesus will say, "Well, you were kind, I noticed, to people who were hungry and thirsty, and sick and lonely and deserted. You gave little gifts, you spoke gentle words, you made little visits, you did what you could. You made people happier. You reduced their sorrow and pain. You did ever so many little things which you have long forgotten, but God never forgets anything." It is just such little things as these that God counts precious, and those who do little things like these, live with Him forever. Heaven is the eternal home of those who have done little things to spread the kingdom of love and peace and joy.

And now who will help us do these little things? God. Would the great God who made the heavens and earth stoop to help a little boy, a little girl? Why not? He is our father. Why should He not stoop? An earthly parent stoops when the baby falls, when it cries for help. Will not our Heavenly Father stoop? Is He not so good and kind as a human being is? He is better and kinder than any person we know. God is always working on little things. If He did not work on little things He could not work on our planet at all. Our earth is only a little thing. I saw a violet one day deep in the woods. It was blooming all alone. "How did you ever come here," said I,

"my dear little flower? Where did you get your beauty and your perfume?" And the violet replied: "I got them from the sun. He gave them to me." I said, "Do you really think that the sun cares for a frail little thing like you? Do you realize how big the sun is? Has anybody ever told you how many thousands of miles in diameter the sun is? Is it not absurd that a sun so majestic and colossal would ever waste time on so tiny a blossom as you?" And the violet replied, "I know the sun is great, but he comes every day, and he throws lightbeams down through these trees to me. He gave me my colour, he presented me my perfume, he created my beauty. He is the strength of my life. I know I am small, but I belong to him. I am the child of the sun."

And so does the great God shine in the face of Jesus Christ upon us all, and whatever is excellent or beautiful or true in the life of any human being, is the creation of the glorious and eternal King of Heaven.

VII

"PREPAREDNESS"

"Be ye also ready."—MATTHEW 24:44.

LET us think for a little while about preparedness. By preparedness is meant readiness to meet a coming test or strain. It is equipment to cope successfully with an approaching ordeal or crisis. It is fitness to stand unabashed in the presence of a foe or friend. Everybody believes in the importance of it, for every to-day opens out into a to-morrow, and every human being is brought constantly into situations which demand a preparedness of mind and heart if failure is to be avoided.

Preparedness is one of the great Christian virtues. Jesus was always insisting upon it. He constantly emphasized the importance of it. He knew that life is critical, and that men must walk with cautious feet, and with eyes which look far ahead. One of His most thrilling words was "Watch!" He spoke it again and again. He uttered it with an accent which awed His disciples' hearts. He said it not because they alone needed to hear it, but because everybody needed to hear it. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch!" And so He says it to us. Over the

heads of the apostles, and over the heads of all the generations, there comes to us to-day, this piercing and urgent word—"Watch!"

Sometimes Jesus dropped the word "Watch" and used "Be ready!" That means the same thing as "Watch." If He were speaking in America to-day He would no doubt say, "Be prepared!" He would exhort us to get ready for the years which lie ahead of us, to equip ourselves so that we may successfully grapple with the coming tasks and problems, to fit ourselves for whatever situations into which we may be cast.

It is interesting to note that Jesus is especially desirous that we shall be ready to meet our friends. When men talk about preparedness to-day, they usually have in mind readiness to meet a foe. The universe is swarming with enemies and therefore you must get ready to fight. You are not ready unless you have deadly weapons. The future is filled with enemies, and it is these enemies for which you are to get ready. This was not the ruling idea of Jesus. He urged men to prepare to meet a friend. "Watch therefore," He said. Why? Because your enemy is coming? No! "Because you know not on what day your Lord cometh." "Be ready, for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh." "Watch," He says, "because you do not know when I am coming, I your friend, your well-wisher, your benefactor, your lover, your Saviour! Be ready to

meet me when I come!" It is of course important that one should be ready to meet his enemies, but it is even more important that one should be ready to meet his friends.

And so the Parables of Jesus on Preparedness are all parables which teach us the importance of being ready to meet a friend. One of the best known of these parables is that of the "Ten Virgins." Five were sensible and five were careless. The girls were all friends of the bridegroom. They would not have been invited to his wedding if they had not been his friends. But five of them were giddy. They did not keep their wits about them. They made no preparation for playing their part when the bridegroom came. He found them unprepared. Being unprepared they did not arrive at the wedding on time. The door was shut, and the stupid girls had to stay on the outside. The tragedy of the parable lies in the fact that these girls were not ready to meet their friend.

The same warning is sounded in the parable of the "Wedding Garment." A great king gives a feast at the wedding of his son. He has a generous heart, and he invites a multitude to come to the wedding. It is a great privilege to be permitted to enter the palace of a king, and it is a high honour to be invited to the wedding of a king's son. No one, you would suppose, would go to such a wedding without being prepared. One man, however, was reckless enough to venture in without having

changed his clothes. In the company of the guests he cuts a sorry figure. The king notices him at once, and says, "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. He had nothing to say. There was nothing which could be said. The king had done him a friendly act, but the man had not appreciated it. He had not dressed himself to meet the requirements of the brilliant occasion, and so it is impossible for him to remain. He goes out into the darkness to take his place among the great multitude who are so disgusted with themselves that they gnash their teeth. When a man discovers that he has made a complete fool of himself, that he has thrown away the greatest opportunity which has ever come to him, he is so overwhelmed with chagrin that he grinds his teeth. The man without a wedding garment was not prepared to meet his friend.

There are two other Parables of Preparedness which everybody ought to know by heart: one the parable of the "Talents," and the other the parable of the "Pounds." In the first a man is given a talent, which is a very large sum of money, and in the second a man is given a pound, which is so small a sum that it can be tied up in a napkin. In both cases, however, the money was not made use of. One man hid his money in the earth, the other tied it up in a cloth, and when the rich man who had kindly entrusted the money to them arrived,

they were not prepared to render an account. All they could do was to hand back the money, confessing that they had made no effort at all to do good with it. Here again we have the sad disappointment of a friend. The rich man had been good to these men, and had shown his confidence in them by entrusting to them a part of his wealth. They did not appreciate his kindness. They made no effort to increase his capital. They were stewards, expected to return a satisfactory account, but when the rich man returned, both stood before him shamefaced and abashed. They were not prepared to meet their friend.

The same lesson is taught us again in the Parable of the "Waiting Servants." The master of a house goes off on a long journey. He apportions a bit of work to each one of his servants. He stations a porter at the door, and tells him to watch. All of them ought to be prepared to meet their lord on his return, because he is their benefactor, and has in his absence entrusted the whole house to their keeping.

Such is the lesson also of the Parable of the "Unfaithful Upper Servant" reported by Luke. The lord of a great establishment goes away on a journey, and appoints a steward over his household, with complete instructions in regard to the management of all the servants under him. The steward, knowing that the lord has gone away for a long time, begins to mistreat the servants and

becomes more and more dissipated, and then one day, quite unexpectedly, the lord arrived, and alas! the steward is not prepared to meet his friend!

This is the teaching of all Jesus' parables on "Preparedness." In every one of them He urges us to be ready to meet our friend. He is not nearly so concerned about our preparedness to meet our enemies, as our readiness to meet our friends. Let us see now who some of our friends are, and for whom we should be getting ourselves ready.

First of all, get ready to meet your father and mother. They are the best friends on earth you have. They give you everything you receive, food, clothing, books, schooling, presents—everything. You must prepare yourselves to give something back to them. What is the best thing which you can give them when you meet them at the close of the day? What is the most precious present you can make them when they are old, and have come down to the bank of the river whose water is cold? The finest thing you can give them is joy over your character, and the record of a successful life. What greater tragedy is there in this world than the tragedy of a child now grown a man, meeting his father and mother at the end of their life's journey, with his name tarnished, and his character degraded, and his record written all over with failure? Be prepared to meet your father and mother when you are grown up with such a brain and heart that your presence will fill them

with pride and joy. Make yourselves so true and useful and beautiful that in the sunset hour of your parents' life, they can look into your faces and thank God that He gave you to them.

Be prepared to meet your teachers. They are your friends. You may not think so just now: you will change your mind later on. They are among your very best friends. They are in the world to help you. You may think them quite too strict, but strict they ought to be. They ought not to allow you to loaf and dawdle, or to do just what you please. They ought to set the standards high, and to insist that you come up to them. They ought to compel you to toe the mark. They are not true friends of yours if they let you off easy. You no doubt think, sometimes, that they are harsh in their criticisms, but this criticism will do you good. Every wrong spelling, and every mispronunciation, and every erroneous date, and every slip in grammar, and every fault of every sort, ought to be pointed out. Teachers are recreant to their duty unless they tell their pupils wherein they go astray. The more deeply interested in you the teachers are, the more zealous will they be to deliver you from all defects. Since, then, your teachers are your friends, you ought to meet them with prepared lessons. If you do not do this, you are doing yourself a wrong. If a boy says in the class, "I am not prepared" in a tone which asserts "I do not care," he is a foolish boy. If a boy is

not ashamed to meet his teacher unprepared, he is rubbing the edge off his conscience, and later on, he will not feel disgraced when he takes hold of life's problems unprepared. If a girl tosses her head and giggles when she says to the teacher, "I am not prepared," she is making it easy for herself to fail all the way through life. It is a bad sign when a boy or girl does not make it a fixed aim always to go to the recitation fully prepared.

Be ready to meet your comrades and companions, the boys and the girls with whom you work and play. You owe them something, and you ought to be ready to pay your debts. To meet them as you ought to meet them, you must cultivate a friendly disposition, and an unselfish temper. Some boys and girls never get on well with their companions because they have not equipped themselves for social life. To get on pleasantly and profitably with others, certain virtues and graces are necessary, and these do not grow unless we cultivate them with patience through the years. Our heart must be sympathetic, and our spirit must be amiable, if we are to make ourselves agreeable to others. Some boys and girls do not know how to keep their friends. They have never prepared themselves to perform the delicate duties of friendship. If we are to be interesting to others, our mind must be well furnished. We must have something to talk about, and we must know how to express ourselves. The Apostle Paul tells us

that our conversation ought to be seasoned with salt. He means that our talk ought to have something in it which invigorates. The conversation of many grown people is stale, flat and unprofitable, because they did not begin when they were young to furnish their mind. They have furnished their house but not their mind. They have a full wardrobe, but not a full heart. There are no elegant rugs in their mind, no beautiful paintings, no costly vases, no lovely tapestries, nothing which makes them rich and attractive. When they meet their acquaintances, they have little to give, because they are unprepared. Fit yourselves early to play a graceful and useful part in the social world.

Be ready to meet the members of the Christian church helpfully. Boys and girls are children to-day, but to-morrow they are grown men and women, and the church must depend upon them for energy and wisdom with which to do its work. Every Christian is expected to make his contribution to the church. Each one must put into it what he has. But suppose he has nothing, how can he put anything in? He certainly can make no contribution unless he is prepared, and the preparation must be carried on through a great many years. One cannot become an effective servant of Christ in a day or a week or a year. Faith and hope and love are built up little by little, and courage and patience and self-control come gradually through the seasons. Many grown men and

women when they come into the church, add nothing to its strength or influence, because they come unprepared. There is nothing they can do, because they are not equipped. There is little they can contribute, because their resources are so meager. Begin to-day, then, to get ready for the work you must do by and by. Some of you are only ten to-day, but in twenty years from now you will be thirty, and the men and the women who are sixty to-day will nearly all be in the other world. One or two or three of them may remain, but they will be feeble and unable to take hold of the hard work which must then be done by the men and women of thirty. A constant procession of our members passes out of our church into the church triumphant, and before you are aware of it the time will be here when you must get under the church and carry it on your shoulders. Begin without delay to fit yourself for service in the church of Christ. The church needs talents of many kinds. It calls for experience and knowledge and wisdom of a hundred sorts, and when you become men and women and the church appeals to you for guidance and support, what a tragedy there will be if you must confess that you are not prepared!

Be ready to meet your fellow human beings on the high and broad plain of humanity. It is sometimes said that every human being is a possible foe. This is true, but it is just as true that every human

being is a possible friend, and it is this second fact upon which you are to build your life. Assume that everybody is friendly to you, until somebody by his action demonstrates that he is your foe. The unhappiest people in this world are the people who are suspicious. They start out with the wrong idea, and starting wrong, they go farther and farther astray. There are men and women who always imagine that others do not like them, or that they are talking about them, or that they are trying to slight them, or insult them, or that they are doing something underhanded against them. Pity such people for they are truly wretched. They are being punished for their sin. It is a sin to be suspicious, and to think evil of our fellow beings. "With what measure you measure it shall be measured to you again." That is an eternal law, and you can no more escape it than you can escape the law of gravitation. If you suspect others, others will suspect you. If you fear others, others will fear you. If you imagine ugly things about others, others will imagine ugly things about you. Always assume that everybody is your friend. Be ready always to give a friendly greeting to everybody. James Russell Lowell never wrote anything truer than this:

> "Be noble! and the nobleness that lies
> In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
> Will rise in majesty to meet thine own."

You may change the word noble into friendly, and the lines will still be true.

> "Be friendly, and the friendliness that lies
> In other men, sleeping, but never dead,
> Will rise in majesty to meet thine own."

For friendliness does sometimes sleep, and there are those who are outwardly our foes. But down deep in the heart of our enemy, there is something which will respond to a friendly appeal if we only have grace enough to make it. We are the child of God, and our alleged enemy is also the child of God, and therefore we and he are brothers, and this being so we must go out to meet him as a brother. Be ready at all times to say "Brother," and to extend a fraternal greeting!

Be ready to meet your friend, Death. Some of you may be surprised to have Death called a friend. The poets have often called him an enemy, but the poets are mistaken. The painters have generally painted him black, but the painters have used the wrong colour. Death is called a King of terrors because we do not understand him. Rightly understood he is our benefactor. He does not do the awful things of which he is accused. He does not cut life short: he lets life out to its completion. He does not quench light: he lets new light in. He does not destroy love: he raises love to a higher power. He does not abolish joy: he gives us increased capacity for rapture. He is our friend.

He is God's messenger sent to open the door, and to tell us that the time has arrived for us to go up higher. Be ready, therefore, to meet him as a friend! I have often noticed in the cemetery that there are many little graves. Boys and girls die, even babies die. No one of us can say how long he has to live. You cannot be certain whether you will ever grow to manhood or womanhood in this world, and, therefore, the only sensible way to live is always to be prepared. How can we be prepared? Only by doing our duty all the time. Only by finishing our work every day. If our work is finished, then it matters little when we die. Jesus died at thirty-three, and just before the end came, He exclaimed: "It is finished!" Every one is prepared for death if his work has been completed.

But Death is only a messenger, and his office is to introduce us to our Heavenly Father. He is our best friend, and our life here is a failure if it does not prepare us to meet this heavenly Friend. He is the one who has entrusted to us our talent. Whatever we possess, we have received from Him. He likes us, and has confidence in us, and that is why He has been so generous in His dealings with us. What a pity to meet Him unprepared to give a good account of what He entrusted to us. It is He who made us a steward. Each one of us is in charge of a small part of our Heavenly Father's big house. He allows us to deal with this little part in any way we choose, but by and by we must

meet Him and give an account of our stewardship. He has invited us all to a great wedding. Jesus Christ was very fond of weddings. At a wedding everything is bright. The flowers are bright, the dresses are bright, the music is bright, the eyes and faces are bright, and the words spoken are bright. There is nothing brighter on earth than a wedding, and that is why, no doubt, Jesus liked to picture the next world under the image of a wedding. It is a bright world to which our Heavenly Father has invited us. He has sent us a special invitation through His Son. His Son has told us the route which leads to it. This world of brightness we call heaven. In order to live there, we must have bright thoughts and bright feelings, and bright motives, and bright aims, and bright dispositions, and a bright character. In other words we must have on a wedding garment. If we are not dressed in white, we cannot live contentedly in such a radiant world. How chagrined we shall feel, if in that world of light we find ourselves unprepared! If the King says to us: "Friend, how camest thou in hither without a wedding garment on?" What shall we say? Like the man in the parable we shall be speechless!

The great English poet, Alfred Tennyson, prepared himself through a long life to stand unashamed in the presence of the King's Son. When he was an old man of eighty-one, he wrote a little poem which is so sweet that many people

like to repeat it, and those who can sing, like to sing it. He told his son Hallam a few days before he died, to put this little poem at the end of all editions of his poems. Here it is in full:

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the
boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time
and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

Alfred Tennyson years ago met his Pilot face to face, and in a few years more, all of us, one by one, shall look into the beautiful face of Him who has loved us and who has given Himself for us. Will you every one be prepared?

VIII

DISCIPLINE

"As a good soldier."—2 TIMOTHY 2:3.

THESE are words of a preacher who lived a long, long time ago. He was old and in prison. In prison he thought of a young man whom he called his boy. He loved him more than any other boy in all the world. One day he decided to write to him. Now it is impossible for an old man to write to a boy without giving him advice. Paul was like all old men. He liked to give advice. This is a piece of the advice he gave Timothy: "Take your part in suffering hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Just four words of this will be enough for a text —"As a good soldier." Let me write that on your mind as a motto for the rest of your life.

Paul lived in a world full of soldiers. Rome was at that time the mistress of the world, and Rome was a military empire. Its soldiers were everywhere. When a boy, Paul had no doubt taken delight in looking at the Roman soldiers. He had watched them march, parade, drill, pitch their tents, break camp. He had gazed on them as they had put on their armour and as they had taken it off. He knew the name of every piece. A boy always likes to look at soldiers.

When Paul grew to be a man he saw more soldiers than ever. He was a traveler, and for thirty years he went up and down the world visiting nearly all the great cities, and wherever he went, he saw soldiers. The tramp of them was always in his ears, the sight of them was always in his eyes, and so the image of a soldier was always in his mind.

In the later years of Paul's life he had more to do with soldiers than ever. He was arrested one day in the city of Jerusalem by a soldier, and was sent down to Cæsarea, seventy miles away, under a military escort of four hundred and seventy soldiers. If it had not been for the soldiers, the mob would have torn Paul to pieces. For two years he was in prison in Cæsarea, and through all this time he was attended by a soldier. At the end of the two years, he was sent to Rome, hundreds of miles away, guarded by a band of soldiers. The ship was overtaken by a furious storm and dashed upon the rocky coast of an unknown island. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners for fear some of them might get away, but their commander was so fond of Paul that he would not allow him to be killed, and so Paul's life was saved again by a soldier. For two years Paul lay in a prison in Rome, and all the time he was under the eyes of Roman soldiers.

Thus you see that Paul had a good chance to find out what a soldier is. Paul had wonderful eyes

and he saw spiritual lessons in everything and in everybody. A soldier was endlessly interesting to him. He often compared himself with the soldier to whom he was chained. He sometimes said to himself: "I too am a soldier. Christ is my commander, I belong to His army, and I am fighting His battles. I also wear armour. My armour is not on the outside of me, but it is inside. It is inside of my clothes, my skin, my flesh; it is around my soul. Righteousness and truth and peace are parts of my armour. Faith and hope and Scripture and prayer are the weapons with which I fight. I am a soldier. I have a hard time of it, but I do not complain. I am often in danger, but I care nothing for that. I shall probably some day lose my life, but I do not mind that. My only ambition is to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ." This was the feeling which was in him the day he wrote to Timothy. The image of the soldier was uppermost in his mind. He felt like an old veteran and he wanted Timothy to follow in his footsteps. "Take your part, my dear boy, in suffering hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

A human being makes the very best of all object lessons. Jesus was always using human beings in His teaching. He used to set a shepherd in the midst of His disciples, and sometimes a farmer, and sometimes a little child, saying—"Look and learn."

Paul had this same habit of holding up human

beings before the eyes of those whom he desired to help. Sometimes he chose a farmer, sometimes a builder, sometimes an athlete, but most frequently a soldier. "Fix your eyes upon these men, and you will get fresh hints as to how to live." There was something about a Roman soldier which especially appealed to Paul, and it is worth our while to try and find out what it was.

We are to-day living in a world which is overflowing with soldiers. Never since history began have there been so many men under arms as at the present hour. Europe is swarming with them, and here in our own country we are going to see them in increasing numbers. It is a good time for us all to fix our mind upon a soldier, and seek to find in him the lesson which Paul found for Timothy nearly two thousand years ago.

What was it Paul found in a soldier which he counted so valuable as an inspiration to all men in building up their character and fashioning their life? It was the willingness of the soldier to suffer hardship. The life of a soldier on service is a hard life. A soldier turns his back on all luxuries. A soldier does not expect even the ordinary comforts. He must march through the dust and the mud, through the sleet and the snow and the hail. He can pay no attention to the weather. He cannot consult his own feelings. He cannot please himself. He cannot do as he chooses. He must do as somebody else chooses. He must please

somebody else. He must obey his commander. Obedience may lead to pain, suffering, death, but what of that? The world gets on only through hardship and suffering. "Take your part, Timothy, in suffering hardship as a good soldier! Hardship is the lot of a soldier. Don't run away from it! Take your share. Please not yourself, but your superior officer, this is the business of a soldier. Don't run away from it! Live your life as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!" It was discipline which Paul had in his mind when he held up the soldier before Timothy's eyes, and discipline is my subject this morning.

What do people mean when they speak about discipline? Very often they mean control. When some one says of a teacher, "Her discipline is fine," he means that that teacher has her pupils under fine control. Her school is a school of order. Her pupils do what she wants them to do. When some one says of a certain home, "There is no discipline in that home," we understand that the children in that home do as they please. Their parents do not have them in control. The discipline of an army is superb when every soldier in it does just what the general commands.

Discipline, therefore, is training. It is drill. It is exercise. It is bringing living things into subjection to authority. When you train an ivy vine to climb round your window or door, you put in a tack here and another tack there, and the vine

grows just where you want it to grow. If you do not train it, it will sprawl out just where it pleases.

When you want to train a dog you say, "Come here and do this." Of course the dog will not do it—not at once. He will look at you with an expression which says: "I wish you would explain that a little more fully, for I confess that I do not quite understand what you mean." When you repeat your command, the dog will probably walk off with an expression in his tail which says: "I have a pressing engagement somewhere else." When you go after him and bring him back and repeat your command, he will probably lie down, saying out of a corner of his eye: "You have no idea how tired I am." If you have little patience you will now surrender and let the dog do as it pleases, but if you want to train the dog you will keep at him, and tell him five, ten, twenty, fifty, and a hundred times what you want him to do and you will never let him go until he does it. That is discipline. A dog does not like it, but it does a dog good.

A soldier is trained in the same way. The officer says: "Attention!" "Shoulder arms!" "Right!" "Left!" "Forward!" "Halt!" and every time, the soldier obeys. All the soldiers obey. They cannot all obey gracefully the first day, and so they are drilled day after day, week after week, month after month, until at last they can move as one man, and do with precision and

ease and alacrity everything the commander tells them to do. This drilling of soldiers is called military discipline. It is very strict. That is why it is so fascinating and so instructive.

What do we mean, then, when we speak of discipline for a boy? We mean training him to toe the mark, drilling him to come up to the scratch, exercising him to give himself up to authority. Several thousands of years ago a wise man said: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." He did not say, "Lecture a child" or "Scold a child" or "Nag at a child," but "Train a child"; that is, drill a child in the things he should do, and when he is a man he will keep on doing them, bend his mind in the direction in which you wish it to grow and in that direction it will grow forever.

We do not have enough discipline in the United States. We should all be better off if we had more of it. Americans as a rule do too much as they please. There is too little reverence, too little regard for authority, too little obedience, too little disposition to toe the mark, too little inclination to endure hardship as a good soldier.

The papers are all the time telling us that there is no longer any discipline in the American home. Boys and girls are allowed to do as they please. Parents obey their children, instead of children obeying their parents. This is not right. This is contrary to the law of God.

We are often told that there is little discipline in the schools, either intellectual or moral. Boys and girls are too often allowed to slip through without half doing their work. At the end of the school course, their mind is as unruly and uncontrollable as an unbroken colt.

There is little discipline, they say, in the colleges. Boys and girls of eighteen are allowed to study what they please, and as little of it as they please, and as for their conduct outside of the classroom, that is allowed to take its own course. The assertion is often made that professors and college presidents think that their sole business is teaching and that they are in no way responsible for the conduct of the students who sit at their feet.

There is no discipline any longer in the church, we are reminded again and again. Church members are allowed to do as they please. They are permitted to neglect public worship for months at a time, or to saunter into public worship any time they see fit, or to spend on luxuries hundreds and thousands of dollars and give only nickels and dimes to philanthropies and missions, or to live selfish and self-indulgent lives, notwithstanding their vow before God and men to follow the example of Jesus, whose life was simple and faithful and full of self-sacrifice.

Family discipline is gone, school discipline is gone, church discipline is gone, and governmental

discipline has not even begun. Is not this the land of the free? Is not an American at liberty to do what he pleases? That is what many of the people think who land at Ellis Island. The common notion of liberty is that every one can do precisely what he wants to do. This is a country in which every man is at liberty to make all the money he can, without ever concerning himself about public affairs, and to have just as good a time as he can possibly have without lifting a hand to assist the town in which he resides. This is Americanism as popularly understood—doing just as you please. There is nothing which our country is so sorely in need of as a lesson on the importance of discipline.

We have great crowds of bad boys and bad girls in this country—boys and girls who do not know how to behave, boys and girls who have never been trained to behave, and who are likely to cause trouble for themselves and for others as long as they live. Not a few of these boys and girls live in our own city. Over fourteen thousand of them were hauled in one year into our Juvenile Court. What a record that is for one city. Most of them were born under the American flag. They were never taught the meaning of discipline. They persisted in doing as they pleased, and fell at last into the hands of the policeman.

There are multitudes of bad young men and young women in the Empire State. We have many

Reformatories and all of them are crowded. Why are these young people in the Reformatories? They were headstrong, and stubborn, and rebellious. Their parents could do nothing with them, and so now they are being boarded at the expense of the state. They were not drilled when they were boys and girls to obey.

O the bad men and women of the United States! Our penitentiaries and jails are always overflowing, and every few years we must build bigger ones. Most of these prisoners were never under control when they were young. They never knew what it is to be a good soldier. They persisted in doing as they pleased.

Our nation abounds with invalids, people who are half sick, or three-quarters sick, or altogether sick. Much of the sickness is due to lack of discipline. Boys and girls are allowed to eat what they please, as much as they please, as often as they please, at any time they please, in any manner they please. They go to bed when they please and get up when they please. They squander the blood of the nerves as they please. When they reach thirty or forty they find themselves invalids. They now begin to pay the penalty for doing as they pleased. The penalties increase year by year until death at last signs a release.

The country abounds in incompetent workers—men and women who cannot do anything well. They are blunderers and bunglers. Many of them

are not worth their salt. They botch everything they try to do. They were never trained to work. It is hard to say which are worse—men or women. Both are bad. There are men who are absolutely worthless. There are women who cannot cook, or sew, or scrub, or sweep, or make beds, or do a solitary piece of the work which the world needs to have done. Alas, for the boy or girl who is never trained to do things and to do them well!

The land is full of shabby and slovenly characters, characters without charm or distinction or strength. You cannot build a character beautiful to look at if you insist on doing as you please. You cannot sing a song worth listening to unless you obey all the laws of song. You must practice for weeks and months and years until your voice is disciplined and knows how to obey instantly and completely every one of the laws of the great kingdom of tone. You cannot paint a picture worth looking at until you have drilled yourself in the art of painting, trained your eyes and fingers to see and feel those subtle mysteries of beauty which lie forever beyond the souls of those who lack the necessary training. You cannot build a character which will stand the scrutiny of God unless you obey all the laws of life. Thousands walk in ragged and shabby garments because they have been too indolent and careless to fashion those costly robes which are expected on the sons and daughters of the King!

Therefore let me urge you to put yourself under discipline. Behave as a good soldier ought to behave. It is the essence of soldiership not to do as one pleases. Never say: "I don't want to." Never whine: "I don't feel like it." Do what your parents tell you to do whether you feel like it or not. Do what your teachers tell you to do whether you can do it or not. If your parents do not insist on your doing what they tell you to do, then have a talk with them. Ask them why they do not make you do the things you ought to do. If your father or mother does not require you to behave, you ought to be sorry. It is the chief business of parents to lay down the law for their children, and if they do not do it, then nothing else which they may do can ever make up for that neglect. If your teacher lets you off easy, tell her you wish she would not do it. No boy or girl ought to want to get off easy in school. You ought to come up to high ideals, and you ought to count that teacher your best friend who is the strictest with you and who never lets you go until you do what you ought to do. "As a good soldier," repeat the words every morning as soon as you get your eyes open. Say them to yourself every day on your way to school. Say them every Sunday morning when you come to church, and you will not be likely to come late, and you will stand up promptly when the congregation is asked to rise, and you will sing when the time comes to sing,

and you will pay close attention all through the sermon.

Live always as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He is lord of the body. Therefore you must put your body under discipline. You cannot eat just what you please. You must eat the things that are good for you. You cannot neglect any part of your body; if you do you will be crippled in all the after battle of life. The papers say that of all the young men of this country who have recently offered themselves to the army, only twenty per cent. have been accepted, and eighty per cent. have been rejected. In other words, eighty out of every hundred, eight out of every ten, four out of every five have been tossed aside because they have something the matter with them. What a record that is! Thousands of them would have been strong enough for the army if they had not always done as they pleased. A boy or girl in his teens ought to be able to walk five miles without getting tired. Suppose a soldier in an army should say at the end of the first mile: "Oh, I am so tired!" and at the end of the second mile he should sigh: "Oh, I am nearly dead!" and at the end of the third mile he should gasp, "I can't go a step farther," his officer would say: "You big baby, why didn't you stay at home?" If young people cannot walk five miles without physical collapse, it is because they are sick. Pay no attention to the weather. Soldiers never do. Brush it aside as you would a

mosquito, and go on where you ought to go. That is the way a soldier does. Do not live on pudding and pie, candy and cake. Eat the things which make you strong. That is the custom of soldiers at the front.

Bring your mind under control. Compel it to do things it does not want to do. Study the books which you do not like. Pick out the study which you like the least, and say: "I'll conquer you if it kills me." Compel your mind to pay attention. Do not let it catnap. Do not allow your thoughts to go wool gathering. Think of your mind as though it were your dog, and compel it to do what you say. If it runs off, say: "Come back here and pay attention." If it lies down, make it get up. It is a disgrace to grow up with an undisciplined mind, a mind that jumps round like a flea or a grasshopper, and never settles down to any serious mental work. A man or woman ought to be ashamed of himself if he carries in his skull a flimsy, flabby brain which cannot read a book above the intellectual level of a primer. You never can read the great books unless you have a disciplined mind.

And then you must discipline your spirit. You must bring it under control. You must get rid of your faults of disposition and temper, and you cannot get rid of them without hard work. Vanity, and laziness, and peevishness, and babyishness must be driven out of the house and kept out.

You must build up all the virtues, and that is a bigger job than putting up a twenty-storied building. You must build up the graces—the beautiful traits of character—and you will have to work at that as long as you live in this world, and you will still be working at it in the world eternal. A disciplined spirit is a spirit which knows how to bow low before God. It is a spirit which knows how to serve others. It is a spirit which is so strong that it is able to forgive, and so Christlike that it is glad to obey God all the way down to the gates of death.

Some people think that all the boys of the country ought to be put under military discipline by the national government, even in times of peace. I do not think so. In the first place, the military discipline leaves out the girls, and it is just as important that girls should be disciplined as boys. Undisciplined girls make poor wives, and poor mothers, and poor Christians. We can never get on with undisciplined girls. When we find the right kind of discipline it will take in both the boys and the girls. In the second place, military discipline does not go deep enough. It takes account of the hands and feet, the legs and the arms, but we want a discipline which takes hold of the imagination and the affections, of the ambitions and the aspirations. A man may be finely drilled in a military camp, and still be a bad son, a bad brother, a bad husband, a bad father and a bad

citizen. Military drill will never give us what we need. If military drill were a cure for the evils of this world, then Europe would now be a paradise. No other continent has ever drilled its men in the use of arms so faithfully and so long as Europe, and alas Europe is in a ditch. The war demonstrates that military drill will never get this world of ours up to the heights where God abides.

What we need and what we must have is the discipline of Jesus Christ. Listen to Paul. He is old and he is wise. He knows the world and he knows God, and this is what he says: "Take your part in suffering hardship as a good soldier"—of Cæsar? No! Cæsar's soldiers can never build a fair and happy world. As a good soldier of Jesus Christ! Don't please yourself, please Jesus Christ. Tell God in your prayers that you want to be a good soldier, that you want to enlist in the army of Jesus Christ, that you want to fight as hard as you can and as long as you live for the extension of the kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy.

IX

PRECIOUS JEWELS

"Foundations of sapphires."—ISAIAH 54: 11.

I WANT to talk to you about foundations of sapphires. You know what a sapphire is. It is a precious stone. It is blue. When polished it shines. It is very beautiful, and very costly, and very hard. There is only one stone in all the world hard enough to scratch a sapphire, and that is a diamond. Because a sapphire is so beautiful, women like to wear sapphires in their rings, and kings in their crowns, and all sorts of people like to look at them and enjoy them. They are radiant. They pick up the sun and throw it at you in a way which makes the eyes laugh. Gems are really flowers—flowers of the inner earth. Flowers born on the surface of the earth soon fade, but these flowers, which are born deep in the dark earth, never fade. They sparkle forever.

Now of all the gems known to the ancient world not one stood higher than the sapphire. The High Priest of the Hebrew Church wore twelve gems on his breastplate, each gem representing one of the twelve tribes. There were four rows with three gems in a row. In the middle of the second row there flashed a sapphire. On one side was an emerald; on the other a diamond. In the book of

Job you will find a wonderful chapter on Wisdom. Job tries to find something with which to compare it. He does not succeed. He runs over in his mind all the precious stones he can think of and throws them all down as unfit to be used in a comparison. Wisdom is not to be compared, he says, with the gold of Ophir, or with the sapphire.

Men like the sapphire the best of all the gems because of its colour. It reproduces on the earth the colour of the sky. It is a quiet and restful colour. It is probably the colour which God likes best. At any rate, He made the sky blue, and He spreads the sky round all the world. It is His decree that we shall live all our life under a canopy of blue. But He is not content with this. There are times of the day when He makes the oceans blue and the lakes blue, as though even the sky could not content Him. And in the late afternoon He makes the distant hills blue, so that you can hardly tell, sometimes, whether you are looking at the blue of the earth or the blue of the heavens. Sapphire then is a favourite gem. Matter presents itself in one of its loveliest forms in the sapphire. It is a gem which is dear to the universal human heart. You must bear all this in mind while I talk to you about the foundations of sapphires.

You know what a foundation is, for you have seen hundreds of them. A foundation is that on which anything stands. It is that by which anything is supported. Every house has a foundation.

It is the lowest part of a house. It is the part which is built first. It is usually the strongest and solidest part of the house, for it must hold up the whole house and everything in it. You have heard of foundations of timber, and of brick, and of stone, but you never saw a foundation of jewels. Gems are too expensive to be used in foundations. They must be placed where they can be seen. But there is a world in which all the foundations must be built of jewels, and the jewels must be as beautiful, and costly, and enduring as sapphires.

I got my subject for this sermon from a preacher, a Jewish preacher, who lived in Jerusalem ever so many years ago. He was a poet-preacher, and that is the best kind of preacher. A poet, you know, has an eye for the beautiful. His heart is in love with beauty. He thinks beautiful thoughts, and clothes them in beautiful dresses. He is all the time speaking to the imagination. Now a poet-preacher brings beauty into his sermons. He not only thinks beautiful thoughts, but he expresses his thoughts in beautiful words, and he uses so many beautiful images and figures that the minds of the people to whom he speaks are kept in a state of delight. One day this Jerusalem preacher—his name was Isaiah—was talking about the church. The church in his country at that time was very poor, and shabby and discouraged, and in order to put new heart into the people, he represented God as speak-

ing to the church after this fashion: "Poor, discouraged church, I know what a hard time you have, I know all about the tempest which is beating on you, and that there is no one to give you comfort, but I assure you that there is a better time coming. I shall never forsake you, and I have made out all my plans already. I am going to build your foundations out of sapphires, and your pinnacles out of rubies, and your gates out of diamonds, and your border out of all sorts of precious stones. In righteousness you shall be established, and none of your enemies, however mighty, shall ever be able to overcome you." This is a poetic way of saying to the poor, weather-beaten church—"I am going to make you beautiful, radiantly beautiful, so beautiful that you will flash your glory into every eye. I am going to make you as beautiful as a city built out of gems."

Of course, the people never forgot it, they could not forget a picture like that. It is easier to remember beautiful things than things which are commonplace and threadbare. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," said a young English poet, and you must find out who that poet was. This description of the church by the Jerusalem preacher has been a joy for over twenty-five hundred years. It was handed down from generation to generation. Preachers quoted it in their sermons, orators wove it into their orations, poets built its phrases

into their verses, and one day a Christian preacher sat down to write a book for the encouragement of poor, discouraged congregations, and before he had finished he happened to think of the beautiful idea of Isaiah. He took it, and made it larger, and added new beauty to it, and painted that wonderful picture which comes at the very close of our Bible, the picture of the City of God, whose walls and gates, foundations and streets are all built out of jewels. In this way God keeps telling us that our supreme business in this world is to do everything we can to make human life beautiful.

When I was reading the last chapters of our New Testament the other day, I got to thinking about the boys and girls of America, and especially the boys and girls of New York City, and still more especially the boys and girls of the Broadway Tabernacle, and I fell to thinking about how they are all at work just now in laying foundations, the foundations of character, of life. Every boy is building a city and so is every girl. The foundations of human life are laid within the first twenty years of our existence on earth. On those first twenty years we build another twenty, if God lets us, and then another twenty, if He is willing, and then another twenty, if He says so, and then another twenty, if He allows us to stay so long, but all of our years, no matter how many they are, are built on the first twenty. They are the foun-

dation years. All of these years ought to be built out of precious stones. At the foundation of life there ought to be beautiful principles and beautiful ideals, beautiful motives and beautiful dispositions, beautiful dreams and beautiful habits. The foundations ought to be built out of sapphires. Sapphires are blue and therefore suggest the sky, and the sky suggests heaven, and heaven makes us think of God. When I say then, that you ought to build your life upon sapphires, I mean that you ought to build it on the sky. You ought to get the sky under your feet. You ought to walk on the sky. You cannot walk as the boys and girls of God ought to walk unless you walk on the sky. You walk on the sky when you live according to the principles of Christ, when you show in your life the graces of Christ, and when you are supported in all that you think and say and do by the ideas which God has expressed in Christ. Let me name you twelve of the precious stones which must be built into the foundation: Obedience, courage, self-sacrifice, humility, kindness, patience, justice, peace, joy, faith, hope, and love. All these are beautiful as jewels. If you build upon these, then you can say that your house is built upon foundations of sapphires.

You have often been told to be good. This morning I want to urge you to be beautiful. No life is thoroughly good unless it is beautiful. No personality is potent unless it has charm. Love-

liness is a form of power, and it ought to be your constant ambition to be lovely. Christ says that Christians are the light of the world, but you cannot light the world up unless you are beautiful. Your life, then, must be foundationed in beauty. You must build your house upon sapphires.

Let me give you as many hints as you have fingers on your right hand. First, form the habit of looking at beautiful things. An English artist, Burne-Jones, said to his little boy one day: "I want you to look at every lovely thing in the world, and remember it, and forget about the rest." That is my advice to you all. Form the habit of picking out the things which are pretty. Train your eyes to linger long on the things that are beautiful. Train your mind to tarry with the things that are lovely. God is always asking you to do this. This is what He says to you every spring: "I wish you would look at these blossoms. I have made them in great variety, and I have given them various colours and various odours and various patterns, and I do wish you would examine them, for I have done my very best to make them as beautiful as possible. I am very fond of them myself, and I hope you will be fond of them too. And I wish you would look at the mosses. Some boys and girls trample mosses under their feet, and never look at them at all. But really they are very beautiful and it will pay you to examine them carefully. I take great delight in creating the

spring because it gives me a chance to reveal my love of beauty. I tuck into the spring every form of loveliness I can think of, and I am very much disappointed when boys and girls and men and women pay no attention to what I have done." If you form the habit of looking for beauty in the spring you will find a lot more of it in the summer, and a lot more in the autumn, and a lot more in the winter. All of the seasons are crammed full of beauty, and the beauty is of a thousand different kinds, so that if you once get your eyes open to it, you will be delighted all the time. You will have a perpetual feast. You can eat beauty just as truly as you can eat bread. You cannot live on bread alone. You must live on all the words which proceed from the mouth of God, and one of the sweetest words is the Beautiful.

If you form the habit early of noticing things which are beautiful, your eyes will pick up lovely things all the way through life. When you go into a room you will see instantly the loveliest thing in it. When you walk through a street, nothing beautiful will escape you. Some people did not learn when they were boys and girls to pick up lovely things with their eyes, and now that they are old they cannot do it. They pick up ugly things. The result is that they are quite unhappy. No one can be happy unless he loves the beautiful. When you walk through the woods, keep your eyes wide open for the beautiful. When you walk

through the human world, if you look for loveliness you will find it in great abundance. This habit of looking for the beautiful is a sapphire. You ought to build it into the foundation.

Second: Form the habit of doing everything you can to make our world more beautiful. Poor world, it is very shabby and in places it is extremely ugly. It is an old world and it has had a long and hard journey. The human race has been out in all kinds of weather, and it has been obliged to contend with many kinds of foes. It is out at the elbows and run down at the heels. Its garments are faded and patched. It does not present a shining appearance. You can help to make it more presentable, if you try. Everybody can do something. Everybody should begin each day by asking himself—"How can I make this world more beautiful?" You might begin with your own room at home. Is it as beautiful as you can make it? Every room in which a person lives ought to have at least one pretty thing in it. That one pretty thing will keep the heart awake. It may be a beautifully bound book, or a picture, or a bit of marble carved handsomely, or a handful of ferns or of leaves. A room is not fit to live in unless it has at least a touch of the beautiful.

What can you do to make your home life more beautiful, your church life, your city life? These are interesting problems to work at, fully as important as any of the problems in the Arithmetic

or Algebra. We are not doing our duty unless we are adding to the charm and bloom of the world. This habit of making contributions to the stock of the world's beauty is a sapphire. It must go into the foundation.

Third: In order to increase the world's beauty one must first of all go to work upon himself. If we ourselves are unlovely, then how can we add to the loveliness of the world? It does not matter how beautiful the room, if the person living in it has an ugly disposition. You may cover yourself with roses, but you cannot be happy if your soul is a thistle. Your soul must be made beautiful if you are to live in a beautiful world. I saw a little girl, five years old, the other day, playing with her doll. Her doll was very pretty, and, as I thought, quite well behaved; but all at once the girl gave the doll a vigorous spanking. I asked—"What is that for?" The girl replied: "My doll has been naughty." If the doll was naughty, of course, she needed to be punished. A girl five years old is old enough to know that. Now you ought, now and then, to take out your disposition, and look at it. You ought to know just what kind of disposition you have. You can find out if you only look at it. Pick up all the things you say and do during the day, and when night comes use these as so many candles. Look at your disposition in the light of what you have said and done, and you can tell quite clearly what sort of disposition you have.

If it is a bad one, you ought to spank it. Spankings are good for bad dispositions as they are for naughty doll-babies, and many a person is cursed with a bad disposition who might have had a good disposition if the disposition had been attended to when that person was young. A beautiful disposition is a sapphire, and it must go into the foundation. I was attending a summer conference a few years ago, and one afternoon a Chinese girl was found lying on the grass all by herself crying. An American girl went where she was and asked her what was the matter. She replied with sobs: "I'm all wrong on the inside." That is the trouble with many people—they are wrong on the inside. Some of them live in beautiful houses and wear beautiful dresses, but they are not happy, because they are wrong on the inside. They have an ugly spirit and their life cannot be beautiful. "Make the tree good," said Jesus, "and then the fruit will be good." We must be beautiful inside if we are to live a beautiful life. The foundations of the soul must be built out of sapphires. You cannot build a sapphire house on a foundation of mud.

Fourth: Do everything as beautifully as you can. You will get ever so much more fun out of life if you do. We never get pleasure out of things which we do slovenly and awkwardly. We know at once when we do a thing horridly that we have wronged our own soul. The Greeks had in their

mythology three beautiful girls. They called them the Three Graces. Everything which these girls did was done beautifully. They were good friends of the Muses, and also attended various gods and goddesses. They haunted the minds of the Greek poets and orators and sculptors and artists, assisting them in all their work. One of the reasons why the Greek race did its work so beautifully was because it was always thinking of these three goddesses—the Graces. You ought to think of them, too. You ought to allow them to help you. You ought to do everything as gracefully as you can. You ought to sit down gracefully, and get up gracefully, and walk gracefully. You ought to strive to gain a beautiful voice, and to use the English language gracefully, and to give your personality the highest possible charm. There are two ways of doing everything—an ugly way and a beautiful way. Some boys and girls do not know how to obey as they ought. They do obey, but they obey reluctantly and frowningly and sulkily, and that is not obedience at all, at least, not the obedience of a human being. It is the obedience of a mule. Such obedience has no sparkle. It does not light up the home. It sheds a gloom in the home. It makes everybody feel bad. It is an ugly obedience, it is not a precious stone. Obedience ought to flash like a sapphire. Does yours? Boys and girls have many troubles. They have their disappointments and their sorrows—just as

many of them as older people have. There are two ways of bearing sorrows—a hateful way and a lovely way. One can make an awful face, and scold and groan and cry, and one can smile and laugh and submit with grace. When one submits gracefully the whole home is lit up as though it were built of jewels. Beautiful conduct shines like a gem. Is there much sparkle to yours?

Fifth: You will be greatly assisted in living the beautiful life, if you keep close to the most beautiful man who ever lived—Jesus of Nazareth. You have thought of Him as being good. I hope you will think of Him, also, as being beautiful. He was the fairest of ten thousand, the one altogether lovely. The foundations of His life were built of sapphires. He walked always on the sky. The five hints which I have given to you, I got from Him. It was His practice to notice beautiful things. He loved the birds and the flowers. They gave Him ideas which He gave to the people. He loved nature and revelled in the loveliness of God's out-of-doors. He saw all the beautiful traits of human nature, and could see loveliness where no one else could see it. Nobody could see any beauty in Samaria. The Jews counted it a horrid country, and hated the people who lived there. Jesus looked upon Samaria with loving eyes and it was as beautiful to Him as a great harvest field. Nobody could see any beauty in Publicans. They were pushed aside and treated like so many dogs. Jesus saw

beautiful aspirations and hopes down in their hearts, and He made one of them a member of the circle of His most intimate friends. Nothing beautiful escaped Him. The act of a poor woman dropping two bits of copper into the contribution box in the temple seemed to Him wondrously beautiful, and He held it up before His disciples, that it might sparkle in the world's eye like a gem, forever.

It was His ambition to make this world beautiful. His country was squalid and unkempt. Human hearts everywhere were gloomy and sad, and He did what He could to make the world happy. He called attention to the things which men were forgetting, and wherever He went human hearts began to sing. Men stood astonished at the beautiful ideas which came out of His mouth. His words will never pass away. They are too beautiful to die.

His disposition was beautiful. His obedience was like a sapphire. "I do always the things which are pleasing to my Father." "My meat is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work." When only a boy, He knew that He must be about His Father's business. He never lost His beautiful spirit. Men were cruel to Him. They told lies about Him, and hindered Him all they could. They called Him horrible names, and told tales about Him to the Roman Governor. They made up false charges against Him, and finally succeeded in getting Him condemned to

death. But He never became sour or bitter. He never gave way to hate. He never threatened to take revenge. He never lost His temper. He never thought or said or did an ugly thing. The foundations of His life were sapphires.

Gems you know are hard. They last. They last longer than almost anything, longer, of course, than wood, longer than iron, for iron rusts; longer than granite, for granite crumbles; longer than marble, for even marble rots, but gems endure. Sapphires outlast kingdoms and empires. Jesus had built on sapphires, and therefore His house never fell. Even to the end His heart was gentle. Men were hateful to Him but He asked God to forgive them. God did nothing to save Him from an awful death, but Jesus died saying, "Father!" He trusted and loved to the end.

Everything He did was beautiful. One of His friends said: "He went about doing good." That is a fine description of His life. He filled every day with beautiful deeds. His thoughts were beautiful, His feelings were beautiful, and His whole life was overflowing with beauty. It was the strongest and most powerful life which has ever been lived in our world, and its strength and its power are due to the fact that it was foundationed on sapphires. You know what I mean by sapphires. I mean the principles of heaven. I mean the ideas of God.

X

WINGS

"With twain he did fly."—ISAIAH 6:2.

THAT word twain is a queer looking word. It looks queer to us, because it is old. It means two. Everybody once used it. Only poets and the Bible use it now. The text means—"With two wings a Seraph did fly."

And who is a seraph? In one of the most beautiful of all our hymns, there is a stanza which runs:

"Holy, holy, holy, all the saints adore thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea,
Cherubim and Seraphim falling down before thee,
Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be."

Where did the poet get these Cherubim and Seraphim? He got them from the fourth chapter of the last book of the Bible, and the author of that book got them from two ancient Hebrew prophets, Ezekiel and Isaiah. The first gave him the Cherubim, and the second gave him the Seraphim. They are the names of celestial beings, stationed around the throne of the Eternal. The spiritual teachers

of Israel, when they tried to think of heaven, could not think of God existing in solitude. They felt sure that there, as here, He must be surrounded by ministers ready to do His will; and they were also sure that these ministers must possess powers superior to the endowments of the inhabitants of our earth. To one class of these higher beings, the name Cherubim was given, and to a still higher class, the name Seraphim. In order to symbolize the exalted powers of these celestial beings, they were given wings. The wings picture an idea, and the idea is that those who stand nearest to God are swift and graceful in their obedience, and are at all times in perfect readiness for service.

So far as we can tell from the Scriptures, a cherub had two wings, whereas a seraph had six. The higher the ministering servant of God, the more wings he had, because the more eager and swift he was in doing what he was told to do.

It is a beautiful idea that the guardians of God's holiness and the servants who run His errands are all endowed with wings; and I want, if I can, to get inspiration out of this idea for our minds and hearts this morning. If the Cherubim and Seraphim have wings, why should we also not have wings? Why should not boys and girls be able to fly? I shall not venture to say that you can have six wings apiece, for you are not Seraphim, but only ordinary boys and girls, but I feel sure that each one of you can have at least two wings. That

will be enough. Isaiah says that even the Seraphim, who must have been very majestic and wonderful, used only two of their wings for flying, and so two wings will be amply sufficient for you.

Having decided on the number of wings, we must now decide as to where you are to wear them. The painters have all told us that angels wear their wings on their shoulders, and possibly the painters are right; but that does not prove that it is on their shoulders that boys and girls are to wear their wings. Boys and girls are not angels, even though in some respects they are called now and then angelic, and, moreover, they are never going to become angels either in this world or in the next. Forever and forever you are going to remain human beings, and you can never hope, therefore, to have wings on your shoulders. I see no reason, however, for doubting that you might have them on your ankles. That, it seems to me, is the ideal place for them to be. That is certainly the place they are most needed. It was on his ankles that the god Hermes wore his wings. Hermes, as you ought to know, was one of the Greek gods. He was the herald and messenger of Zeus, the father of the gods, and the Greek poets and painters and sculptors always liked to think of Hermes as having wings. When painters painted him on the walls of Greek temples, or when sculptors carved him in marble, they never failed to represent him with wings, and his wings were always on his an-

kles. They took it for granted that if any one is going to act as a herald of God, it is necessary for him to be agile and speedy. It was for this reason that Hermes was always pictured with wings.

Now, so far as I can find out, the wings of Hermes grew out of his ankles, although some of the artists seem to have made his wings a part of his sandals. I have no doubt that his wings really grew out of his bodily ankles, but of course that cannot happen to you. You are not a god, but just plain, everyday mortals, and therefore your bodily ankles must remain without wings. You must be content to have your wings on the inside of you; that is, on the ankles of your mind. And this, I am convinced, is where they will do you the largest service. Your physical ankles are all right. It is your mental ankles which need attention. Your cardinal defect is likely to be slowness of soul. The thing which I fear is that your thoughts and affections may not run swiftly enough, and that your will may prove to be tardy and stupid. It is amazing how many boys and girls have a poky mind. It is your mind that needs wings, and if you do not have them, it will be all your own fault!

Before I proceed with my sermon, I wish you would examine your mental ankles, and find out if any wings have already begun to sprout. If you can find no signs of any, then there is reason for alarm; and I beg you to give heed to the matter without delay. My advice to you is that you make

a careful examination at least once every year as long as you live, and find out just how your wings are progressing. Like all other powers of the mind, wings grow only as they are nourished, and if one neglects them, or forgets all about them, they are likely to dwindle, and may completely drop off. A boy or girl without wings is one of the most pitiable of all creatures.

Our subject, then, is "Wings," or, in plain English, we are going to think about the duty of being quick. If you never knew before that it is a duty to be quick, it is high time you were finding that out. Many a life has been made unhappy simply because the person living it persisted in being so slow. Multitudes have missed out of life the very best things, for the reason they were sluggish and belated. Thousands of lives have been wrecked because men and women have been negligent in the work of cultivating their wings.

Some person with a critical disposition might say to me at this point that boys and girls are naturally quick, and that a sermon on quickness is therefore quite uncalled for; but I beg leave to think that such a critic is mistaken. Boys and girls need exhortations to speed up, no less than do their elders. Paul's words are wholesome for all of us—no matter how young or how old we may be—"The time is short." The time of childhood is short. It lasts only a few years. When those years are gone, they return no more forever. If you are going to

get out of youth the sweet things which God intends children to enjoy, then you must be quick about it, and you cannot afford to waste a single day. The time which you will spend in your parents' home is short. It will be ended before you know it, and being ended, it will return no more. Most of you still have your father and mother with you, but you will not have them always, and therefore if you are ever going to appreciate them, and be grateful to them, and help them, and make your home what a home ought really to be, you must be prompt about it. There is not a day to be lost. When your father and mother are in their graves, you cannot serve them any more. The time in school is short. You sometimes think that the days are long, and so they are, but the years are short. They will be gone before you have learned half the things you ought to know. If you want to get out of school what the school has to give, then you must make haste, and not dawdle over your lessons. You ought to develop vigorous wings on both of your ankles. All my life I have heard men and women lamenting that when they were in school they wasted their time. They trifled and loitered along, they dallied, and had what to them seemed a good time, and now they have a sad time when they remember the golden opportunities which they threw carelessly away. School days come but once, and every boy and girl ought to use his wings every hour. Indeed, our whole lifetime

is short. It is like a vapour which appears for only a little while. The time is approaching when no one of us can work in this world any more, and, therefore, it is tragic for anybody, young or old, to be inching his way along like a centipede, when he ought to be soaring through the years on wings.

All the way through life, one must pass through experiences which are disagreeable. Such experiences should all be approached on wings. To worm one's way up to an hour which is dismal, is only to increase the sum total of human woe. If, for instance, you are to take a swim in cold water, you cannot afford to stand upon the bank and look at the water. That is the way to cause the nerves to shiver. It is foolish to immerse the feet one toe at a time. That only prolongs the agony. The only sensible thing to do is to make a flying leap, to take a headlong plunge; and the boy or girl who does this meets the water warm. Icy water is delighted when it finds a human being unafraid of it. It blesses him with a glow. A cold bath is torture to any one who is unwilling to put on his wings.

A bottle of bitter medicine should always be attacked on wings. Alas, for the boy who crawls up to it on his mental hands and knees! To look at the bottle makes him miserable. To gaze at the spoon raises the misery to a higher power. To sip the horrid mixture one drop at a time converts human life into a Gehenna. The only sensible way

to deal with medicine is to rush at it with more than railroad speed. The quicker the action, the better. Whenever medicine is to be taken in a family, then let the victim proceed at once to adjust his wings. There are some things which ought to be done so swiftly that the human eye cannot detect just how they are done. Magicians work these wonders so swiftly that the sight cannot follow them. When it comes time to swallow medicine, all boys and girls should convert themselves into magicians. They ought to do the trick so swiftly as to render their action invisible. The sight of a medicine bottle is a signal that the time has arrived to put on wings.

To get out of bed on a cold winter morning is for many a boy and girl a heavy responsibility. It becomes all the more appalling when it is done without wings. One foot at a time, or one leg at a time, and that, too, with long-drawn-out deliberation, is one of the most exquisite forms of torture known to the human soul. On winter mornings there is urgent necessity for wings in good repair, and the escape from bed should not be made on foot, it should be made by flight. It is fun to fly out of bed like an eagle, but it is misery to crawl out like a caterpillar.

At this point let me give you a bit of advice in regard to your method of study. There are two ways of studying—a wrong way and a right way—and many a boy and girl takes the way which is

wrong. They spend too much time on their lessons. They would learn more if they cut the study period down. They do not encourage their mind to work with snap and vim, and so it settles down into an ill-tempered and crotchety drudge. They assume that their intellect is a snail, but the assumption is both false and fatal. Let me give you a secret. Under the skin of every human mind, there are concealed a pair of embryonic wings. These will sprout if they are properly encouraged. It is wonderful how rapidly they will grow if cultivated, and how strong they will become if exercised. There is no bigger bore in this world than study if carried on by a mind which dozes and creeps. It is only when the mind is wide awake and flies, that study becomes exhilarating and school a joy. The wise thing, then, to do is to shorten the time spent on any particular lesson as much as possible. A boy may say Monday morning: "I must spend two hours on my algebra to-day, because that is the time which I spent on the lesson a week ago." That is a foolish thing to say. What he ought to say is: "I spent two hours on last Monday's lesson, and I shall therefore spend only an hour and three-quarters to-day." If he succeeds (and he will), then let him say on the Monday a week later: "To-day the work shall be done in an hour and a half." The only way to enjoy study is to study with speed. The mind is not a worm created to crawl, but a winged thing

intended to fly. Unless it is encouraged and trained to fly, it is certain to be discontented, and will make the life of its owner most miserable. Many children hate books, because no one ever told them how to develop their wings.

It is by cutting down our time of study that we increase our time to play. We all like to play, and the reason is that when we play, we always use our wings. No one can mope or drawl in a game. A game loses its zest the moment any one of the players loses his speed. All out-of-door games are gloriously swift. Baseball is endlessly fascinating, and one secret of its fascination is the speed at which it is played. Baseball cannot be played by human snails. Football must be played with speed or not at all. All football players learn at once the art of flying. All the life would be taken out of football if the game were lengthened to ten hours, and it were made a rule that no player should move more than three feet in ten minutes. By crowding the game into narrow limits, it becomes so intense and furious that it stirs the hearts of the spectators beyond any other game that is played. Human nature loves to see men fly. The glory of tennis lies largely in its swiftness. The ball is always in the air, and it is always moving, and the players are always after it. Tennis is played by men with wings. Polo is not a game for men who are rheumatic, or for ponies which have a chronic reluctance to move. In polo both men and beasts use

wings. Even a quiet indoor game like "Going to Jerusalem" has no fun in it for anybody who is not as nimble as a squirrel. Unless you are quick as a flash you can never get to Jerusalem at all. Whenever you play, you use your wings, and that is the secret of your enjoyment. The fun lies in the speed. When you work, you are tempted to fold your wings. You limp, and hobble, and crawl, and the result is that work is an abomination. Make it a rule, then, to do everything with dispatch. Do all your work as quickly as you can, and still do it well. If you do it more quickly than the nature of it allows, then you spoil both it and yourself. If you do it more slowly than the nature of it compels, then you may spoil it and are certain to spoil yourself. There is no kind of work done in this world which does not call for the use of wings. It should be the ambition of every worker to convert his work into sport. If you sit down before a task and sigh, "Oh dear me! This will use up three hours of my time, and I shall be half dead before I have finished it," the outlook is indeed dark. But if you say, "This job would ordinarily take at least three hours, but to-day I am determined to do it in two," the universe at once breaks into song, because of the advent of a soul who has wings. By increasing our speed we diminish the friction, and by getting rid of friction we increase the buoyancy of the heart. Never begin a hard piece of work without putting on your

wings. All labourers of every sort ought to fly at their work and then fly through it.

Life is a series of choices. The most important of our choices can be made with the rapidity of lightning. "This thing is right! Shall I do it?" The answer is "Yes." It should fly out of the soul on wings. "This thing is true! Shall I speak it?" The answer should follow like a flash of lightning. Any delay is dangerous. There are moments in life so momentous that we are lost if we do not fly through them. "Shall I do the thing which is generous and noble?" Of course! "Shall I be true to my convictions and oppose what I believe to be wrong?" Certainly! The answers must all come on wings. In the realm of moral action, we are messengers of God, and it is only by instant decisions that we can give Him joy.

Many people fall the victims to temptation because they do not use wings. It is unsafe to try to crawl away from temptation, or even to run away from it. One must fly. There are two words in our language which should be pronounced with great quickness—"Yes" and "No." A dilatory and hesitating "Yes" is often no "Yes" at all, and a fluctuating and flickering "No" is sometimes the first step toward destruction. When questions of right and wrong are up, we must not dilly-dally, or shilly-shally, or hum or haw, but mount up with wings like Seraphs. We are heralds of the Infinite Holiness, and it is a disgrace if

we stumble and falter, when we are sent on a divine errand across the earth.

Many virtues owe their supreme beauty to their possession of wings. Obedience is one of these. A tardy and poky obedience is shabby and repulsive. When you are told to do a thing, and you say, "Yes, bye and bye," "After a while," "Tomorrow," "Sometime," "When I feel like it," "When I get ready," it is a tortoise species of obedience and will never win God's favour. To obey with sour face and grumpy heart is a form of crawling. It is only when you fly in your obedience that it resembles the obedience of a Seraph. If boys and girls want to get near the throne of God, they must obey their parents and teachers with speed and gladness. The only obedience which is lovely in the eyes of God is an obedience which travels on wings.

Jesus of Nazareth, our Guide and Saviour, was quick in everything He did. When Jesus met the Tempter in the wilderness He did not dally with him. The devil said one thing, and Jesus immediately said another thing; when the devil said a second thing, that second thing was instantaneously demolished. The third thing the devil said met the same fate. No wonder the devil left Him. Jesus was too quick for him. The devil loves to hang around people who are slow. If you do not fly at him on wings he will surely get you. Jesus was quick in His answers to evil-minded men.

They often tried to trap Him, but they never did. He took their breath away by the swiftness of His replies. He was quick in His work. He never loitered and He never loafed. He plunged headlong into whatever His Father gave Him to do. He worked so hard and fast, some people called Him crazy. If you want to get a good idea of the rapidity of Jesus' movements, then read the first chapter of the Gospel according to Mark. Mark wrote down the things which Peter was in the habit of telling his congregations, and the thing which impressed Peter as deeply as any other feature of Jesus' character was the headlong swiftness of His life and work. Jesus was always talking, always working, always going about doing good. As soon as He felt it to be His duty to go to Jerusalem, He went there, even though He was sure He would be killed. He flew, even, toward the cross. If He had gone like a slug, His life would have lost half its beauty and all its power. No one would care for a Jesus who went grudgingly and grumblingly to His death. It is the quickness with which Jesus responded to every demand of God which makes His life a delight and inspiration to all the world. We love Him because He had wings. His obedience was always instant and complete. He was so alert and so endlessly active through all the years, that the man who was the nearest to Him declared, in his old age, that if any one should try to write down all the things which Jesus did, the world it-

self would not contain the books which should be written. This is another way of saying that Jesus had wings.

This, then, is the kind of Man we are to follow. He is our Leader, Teacher, King. To be His heralds and messengers is our highest duty. To be like Him we must do our work with swiftness. God expects us to place ourselves on the side of Jesus. We are to accept His principles and carry on His work. We are openly to confess ourselves His disciples and servants. This we ought to do immediately. It is foolish to put it off. There are men and women thirty years old who are still putting it off. They put it off now because they put it off at twenty, and they put it off at twenty because they put it off at ten. There are people at sixty, and even above seventy, who are still thinking this matter over, unable to make up their minds. They are crawling like worms to the grave because when they were young they never developed their wings.

Jesus says to every one of you: "Follow Me." What is your reply? Do not hold it back. Give it now! Use your wings. Many of you are already Christians, and to you He says: "Come closer to me, and help me more faithfully in my work." Do not keep your answer for to-morrow. Give it to-day! Put on your wings. Imitate the Seraphim. Become swift Heralds and fleet Messengers of God!

XI

THE "MAYFLOWER"

"These all died in the faith not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

—HEBREWS 11:13.

LET me tell you about a ship, a very famous ship, a truly wonderful ship, the *Mayflower* is its name. This is a good year to think about it, for this is the year 1920, and it was in 1620—just three hundred years ago—that the *Mayflower* made its immortal voyage. Between now and next December millions of people on both sides the Atlantic are going to think and talk and write about the *Mayflower,* and we might as well begin right here and now to do some thinking and talking of our own.

It was just a little ship—nothing at all like the huge ocean liners which come up our harbour every week. By the side of the *Adriatic* and the *Baltic* and the *Cedric* and the *Celtic* the *Mayflower* would look like a little tug, and compared with the *Olympic,* and the *Acquitania,* and the *Imperator,* and the *Leviathan* it would look like one of those toy boats which boys sail on the lake in Central Park. It

could not be compared with an old-fashioned boat like Noah's ark, for the ark was four hundred and fifty feet in length and the *Mayflower* could sail into Noah's ark without crowding the animals very much. It was not as big as a Staten Island Ferry boat, for ferry boats have a tonnage of two thousand tons, whereas the *Mayflower* could boast only of one hundred and eighty tons. It was a tiny David of a boat among the Goliaths of the sea.

What it looked like we can guess from the pictures of other boats of that far-off time, but no seventeenth century picture of the *Mayflower* exists to-day in all the world. No photograph of it was ever taken for the good reason that nobody in the seventeenth century owned a kodak. No oil painting of it was ever painted for the reason that no artist cared to waste his paint on a ship so commonplace and humble. No sketch of it was ever made by man or woman, boy or girl, and that I think is a wonder and a pity. There were eight girls on the *Mayflower,* and after they landed on Plymouth Rock why did they not all sit down on the rock and draw a picture of the faithful ship which had carried them in safety across the sea? Maybe they were seasick, and maybe it was too chilly to do any sketching on that December Monday morning. There were twenty boys on the *Mayflower,* and what could they have been thinking about that they did not draw a picture of the ship? They had plenty of time to do it, for the

Mayflower remained in Plymouth harbour all through January and February and March. It was not till April 5th that she started back to England. Through all those months she had no doubt looked pleasant, waiting to have her picture taken, but not a boy thought it worth his while to use his pad and pencil. But possibly he had no pad, and it may be there were no pencils. At any rate nobody in the old world or in the new ever took the pains to paint or sketch the *Mayflower*. That, I presume, ought not to surprise us, for nobody, so far as we know, ever painted or sketched the face of the most wonderful man who ever lived —Jesus of Nazareth. We guess at the face of Jesus and we guess at the looks of the *Mayflower*.

Nobody knows where or how the *Mayflower* died. Of course it died somehow and somewhere, for ships as well as men decay and pass away. What do you suppose became of the *Mayflower?* Did a cruel storm wound it, and on some black night did it go down to the bottom of the sea, with not even a star looking on? Or did it go on doing its work as faithfully as it could, until it grew shabby and old-fashioned and shaky, so that the owner became ashamed of it, and would not ask it to sail any more? What became of it, I wonder. Was it sold to be split up into kindling wood or was it allowed to lie out on the sand and gradually fall to pieces, the waves carrying off one piece at a time until at last the noble ship had vanished for-

ever? It is too bad that no one has ever written a poem on the death of the *Mayflower.*

There are in the world multitudes of museums into which have been gathered thousands of precious relics of the past, but in no museum can be found the skeleton or even one bone of the *Mayflower.* In no house of England or America does there exist a chip of it, or even a splinter of it. Plymouth Rock has had a different career. It lay for years right out on the beach in full view of the world, and sightseers could not look at it without wanting to carry a piece of it away. And so they hammered at it and hacked at it until the poor rock threatened to disappear, whereupon some kind-hearted person built a strong iron fence around it. You can look at the rock but you cannot touch it. But the *Mayflower* you can neither touch nor see. The person who owns a piece of Plymouth rock is counted among the luckiest of all mortals. The man who could say: "I have a piece of the *Mayflower*" would be ranked among the demi-gods. The *Leviathan* is 920 feet long and 100 feet broad, but if some bright morning the *Leviathan* and the *Mayflower* should sail up the Hudson River, no one on either bank of the river would see the *Leviathan.* The *Leviathan* is big, but the *Mayflower* is great, and it is greatness and not bigness which catches and holds the eye of the world.

What makes the *Mayflower* so great? What gave it a fame which will never fade? It is fa-

mous not because of its beauty or its size or its cost. Its fame is due to what was in it. It was its cargo which gave it immortality. Its cargo was not silver or gold or precious stones, neither was it costly silks nor priceless works of art. Silver and gold it had none. It was poor in all the things which are offered for sale in the world's markets. There must have been a deal of old-fashioned furniture on board if we are to judge from the relics which are handed down from generation to generation in certain families as heirlooms from those early times, but the *Mayflower* was something more than a moving van. It brought something more valuable than quaint bedsteads and curious-looking platters and spoons. Its cargo was people—102 of them—and it is those people who have caused the *Mayflower* to shine like a star in the firmament of history. It is not what a ship is made of, but what a ship carries which fixes its place in the world's mind. The little ship which carried Columbus across the Atlantic, the still smaller ship which brought Paul from Asia to Europe, the little fishing-boat which carried Jesus and His apostles through a storm on the Sea of Galilee—those are far more important vessels than the *Leviathan* even though the *Leviathan* has a tonnage of over 54,000 tons. A ship is like a man. It is not his size, but what is in him which determines his rank. It is not the tonnage of the *Mayflower,* but the texture and temper of the people who sailed in her cabin,

that accounts for the fact that two worlds are getting ready to celebrate the three hundredth anniversary of her most notable voyage.

They were indeed remarkable people—those 102—but strange to say nobody in 1620 knew it. That is something which was found out later. To the people of their day the men and women who sailed in the *Mayflower* were exceedingly ordinary, altogether common. They belonged to what we call the working classes. They were bakers and tailors and masons and carpenters and cabinet-makers and twine spinners, not the kind of people for anybody to make a fuss over. There were no blue bloods among them—not a noble nor the descendant of a noble. Not one of them could boast of his pedigree. There were no scholars among them, not more than one, possibly, who had ever been in college. They possessed no learning. They were devoid of all political influence, for not one of them held political office or enjoyed political prestige. They were not rich. Most of them were poor. They were so poor that it took them a long while to save up enough money to get them across the Atlantic. Before starting they had to sell some of their provisions in order to get sufficient cash to satisfy the men who were bringing them. No man of wealth sailed on the *Mayflower*. Nor did any man of genius. There was no poet among them, or orator, or architect, or sculptor, or musician, or painter, or singer. The five-talented men were all

absent. Now it is by ancestry or learning or political rank or wealth or genius that men ordinarily climb to fame and power. These are the five rounds in the ladder up which men make their way to a place in the sun, but the people of the *Mayflower* had none of the things which the world counts indispensable, and yet strange to say, these hundred people are among the most famous mortals who have ever lived. At the end of three hundred years millions of people are praising them, and at the end of three thousand years the world will be praising them still. When will their glory fade? Never!

They were not only commonplace and insignificant, but they were to many of their neighbours decidedly disagreeable. Most people put them down as cranks and bores. They had a queer way of thinking. They insisted on the right to think for themselves. They refused to submit to customs just because the customs were old. They declined to do things just because somebody told them to do them. Even the King—so these men said—had no right to dictate to them in regard to certain matters of importance. This of course displeased the King. He was a good man and tried to do what was right, but he could not allow subjects of his to claim the right to decide for themselves how they were going to worship God, and so he said one day: "I will make them conform or I will harry them out of the land."

He did not make them conform, but he did harry them out of the land. England was made so uncomfortable for them that they at last fled to Holland. They were sneered at and jeered at so constantly, they were fined so often, and were kept in jail so long that life in England became intolerable, and so they escaped across the North Sea. Nobody in England was sorry when they went, and nobody in Holland was glad when they came. In fact nobody cared what became of these odd people who stirred everybody up by claiming the right to think for themselves. They stayed in Holland twelve years. Nobody paid much attention to them. They were foreigners, and worked hard every day for a living, and it made no difference to Holland when they went away. They lived in the city of Leyden, but the city did not put on mourning when they departed. They went out of the city without attracting any notice at all. Nobody in America invited them to come. The Frenchmen in Nova Scotia, and the Dutchmen at the mouth of the Hudson, and the Englishmen in Virginia had no love for them. There was nobody here to welcome them when they arrived. Nobody wanted them. To most people in 1620 they were social nobodies. The few who knew them were either suspicious of them, or afraid of them. It seems strange that men and women should become so wonderful and adorable three hundred years after they are dead!

It is worth our while to find out the cause of this if we can. It is clear that it was not because of anything which these people possessed that they now sit on thrones. It must be because of what they were. Their fame must be due not to their possessions but to their character. It must be their spirit which has given them such a grip on the mind and heart of the world. What was their spirit? They were men and women of undaunted courage. The crowd could not frighten them. Even Bishops and Kings could not make them afraid. They were willing to be pelted by the mob. They were ready at any time to go to jail for their convictions. They did not hesitate to become exiles in order to enjoy liberty. They did not allow even the big Atlantic to turn them from their purpose. The Atlantic is to-day only 3,000 miles wide and can be crossed with ease in less than six days. In 1620 the Atlantic was 15,000 miles wide, and to the *Mayflower* it turned out to be more than 30,000 miles wide. But distances had no terror for them. No obstacles overcame them. No difficulties ever blocked their way. They were heroes and heroines. No braver men and women have ever lived.

They were as persistent as they were courageous. Their tenacity of will was amazing. When they decided to do a thing they did it. When they made up their mind, their mind was made up. They resolved to go to Holland. There were a hundred obstacles in the way. They overcame them all.

They decided to go to America. There were a thousand difficulties to be met and conquered. They met and conquered them every one. It is hard for us to throw ourselves back three hundred years and see New England as they saw it. They saw it from Holland, and from that distance it was a dreary and desolate place. In 1602 Bartholomew Gosnold had landed on Cape Cod with thirty-two men. They built a few huts on Cuttyhunk, stayed one month and then hurried home again. One month in New England was enough for Gosnold and his followers. In 1607 George Popham had come with 120 men to the mouth of the Kennebec. A colony was planted, houses were built, but in a short time the enterprise was abandoned, and these heroes hastened back to England. In 1614 John Smith had visited the Massachusetts coast, but on his return to London he said: "I am not so simple as to suppose that any other motive than riches would ever erect there a commonwealth, or draw company from their ease and humours at home to stay in New England." In 1618 Francis Blackwell had started for the new world with a company of 180, but on the voyage 130 of them died, and only 50 escaped. It was in the summer of 1619 that dark rumours of this fatal enterprise floated through the streets of Leyden. But the English exiles did not tremble or give up. They decided to push forward. They saw now that it was not wise for their entire church to go.

Only volunteers were called for and only the youngest and strongest should lead the way. It was in the middle of July, 1620, after exasperating and seemingly endless complications and disappointments and delays that the start was made for Southampton. Two ships had been provided, the *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell*. Before they had gone far the *Speedwell* sprang a leak, and it was necessary to go back to Dartmouth for repairs. Two weeks later a second start was made, but at the end of 300 miles the *Speedwell* sprang a leak again, and it was necessary to return for repairs to Plymouth. The *Speedwell* was now abandoned, eighteen of her passengers returned to London, twelve were crowded into the *Mayflower*, which already had 90, making a total of 102.

When half-way across the Atlantic, a gang of storms fell upon the little vessel, and pounded her almost to pieces. These storms kept on day after day for weeks, and the poor bewildered ship was driven so far out of her course that the captain was greatly surprised when on a day in November he looked out on the white sands of Cape Cod. The intention had been to settle near the mouth of the Delaware, and the prow of the *Mayflower* was now turned toward the south, but new winds flung themselves across the path and dangerous shoals began to show themselves, and there was nothing to do but to go back and explore the coast of New England. Eastern Massachusetts is a lovely place

in 1920 even in the midst of winter. To multitudes New England is a paradise both in summer and in winter. It was far from a paradise when the Pilgrims came. There were no roads, no towns, no houses. There were no luxuries, no comforts, not even necessities. There were Indians and wolves, and biting winds, and a vast loneliness—that was all. The story of the sufferings of that first and awful winter is one of the most pathetic and tragic pages in human history. No sooner had they landed than death began to do his fearful work. There were only a hundred of them, and then one died, and then another, and then another, until there were ten graves on the desolate shore. And then another died, and then another, and then another, until there were twenty graves covered by the snow. And then others died, and then still others, until the graves numbered thirty. And then death came again, and then again, and still again, until the graves mounted to forty. Death even now refused to show mercy, and came again and still again until almost half of the entire colony had been wiped out before the first day of spring. Before the summer was ended 53 of the original 102 were in their graves. Fourteen out of the eighteen wives were dead. At one time only six or seven of the colonists were strong enough to look after the sick and dying. More than once it looked as though the entire colony would be annihilated. Surely the survivors

will return to England when the *Mayflower* starts back. Why should they remain in that wilderness to meet certain death? April 5th arrives. The *Mayflower* is ready to sail. How many of the half hundred rush toward her eager to go home? Not one. She sailed, and from the shore sad but determined eyes watched her until at last her sails were lost in the green of the sea. The heroes and heroines of the *Mayflower* were now alone in a wild, bleak world, five hundred miles away from their nearest white neighbours. Was there a man dismayed—or a woman? Not one. With undaunted hearts the little company proceeded to carry forward the work upon which they had begun.

Certainly these are people whom it is good for us to know. We should know even the names of at least a few of them. Let me give you the names of seven men who will stand forever in the company of the world's immortals: William Brewster, William Bradford, John Carver, John Alden, Edward Winslow, Samuel Fuller, and Miles Standish. There are other names which I hope you will learn and cherish. I mention only two: Peregrine White and Priscilla Mullins. Strange to say they are among the Pilgrim Fathers, even though the first was a baby and the second a girl. Peregrine White was no ordinary baby. He has the distinction of being the first English baby born in New England. He was born on the *Mayflower* in the

month of November. He was possibly the only Pilgrim Father who could not put his foot on the rock when the day for the landing arrived. Everybody ought to know the name of at least one of the *Mayflower* girls, and if you want to know why my favourite *Mayflower* girl is Priscilla Mullins you must read the poem of Longfellow on "The Courtship of Miles Standish."

One question remains. What made these people what they were? It was their religion. They had no money, but they had convictions. They possessed no learning, but they were believers. They lacked social standing, but they were men of faith. They had received a heavenly vision, and were not willing to be disobedient to it. They believed in God. They were sure of His power and His goodness. They were certain He had revealed His mind and heart in Jesus Christ. They were convinced that Jesus Christ is King. This was why they could not allow King James to dictate to them in matters of religion. They looked over the head of the English King into the face of the King of Kings. It was not to make money but for the glory of God that they came to New England, and it was for His glory that they were willing to endure every privation and hardship. It was because they were sure of His presence that they were not afraid of the winds or the waves, of the Indians or the wolves. On reaching land, Bradford says: "They fell upon their knees and blessed the God of

Heaven who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their proper element."

One Saturday before they left the *Mayflower*, forty-one men signed a compact agreeing to form a civil body politic for their better ordering and preservation. The compact began: "In the name of God Amen." That was the beginning of Democracy in the new world. That was the compact out of which later on in 1776 was to come the Declaration of Independence. When John Carver was elected the first Governor the experiment began of organizing and running a government without a king.

And when year after year they conducted church meetings and carried on the worship and work of Christ, they demonstrated to the world that a church can exist without a Bishop. These two ideas are revolutionizing the world. Democracy in church and state is one of the blessings which all mankind is certain some day to enjoy. The greatest of all wars was fought for the purpose of making the world safe for democracy. We are to have, everywhere, soon or late, government of the people, by the people, and for the people. The Pilgrim Fathers opened a new epoch in human history. They were the pioneers of a new civilization. Here is a sentence of William Bradford which you should copy: "They knew they were

Pilgrims and looked not much on those things, but lifted up their eyes to the heavens, their dearest country, and quieted their spirits."

Here is a sentence from William Brewster which ought to be memorized by every boy and girl in America: "It is not with us as with other men whom small things can discourage or small discontentments cause to wish themselves home again."

The *Mayflower* is immortal because it brought to America a group of men who had two great ideas: there can be a church without a Bishop, there can be a state without a King. The people are the rightful rulers of their life, and where two or three are assembled in the name of Jesus, He is in the midst of them. It was a New England poet, James Russell Lowell, who when only twenty-six years old wrote a stanza which you would do well to write upon your mind.

"New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth.
Lo, before us gleam her camp-fires! we ourselves must Pilgrims be,
Launch our *Mayflower,* and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,
Nor attempt the Future's portal with the Past's blood-rusted key."

XII

FIVE WRONG IDEAS OF GOD

"The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
—1 PETER 1:3.

LET us think a little while together about God. Do you like to think about Him? If you do not, you do not think of Him in the right way. Many people do not like to think about God, and the chief reason is that they think wrong things about Him. They have a mistaken idea of God, and this idea is so uninteresting that it hardly ever comes into their mind. Some people have such a horrid notion of God that they are frightened by it. It scares them and makes them shudder. Now if we have a false idea of God, an idea which makes us feel uncomfortable or afraid, of course we shall not think of Him often, because we like to think of things that are pleasant and that make us feel happy. If thinking about God makes us gloomy or wretched it will not be easy to think about Him no matter how hard we try. The first thing that everybody ought to do is to try and find out the right way of thinking about God.

Jesus liked to think of God. He was always thinking of Him, and He talked with Him a great

deal. And because He thought about Him and prayed to Him so much, He had a habit of talking about Him to others. Whenever He got a chance He told people something about God. He had just one favourite subject, and that was God. When He was with His friends He would talk to them about God, and when He was with strangers He would bring the conversation round to God. He did not hesitate to talk about God everywhere. Some of us, perhaps, do not think of God except when we are in church, and we never expect anybody to speak about Him except in a religious service. If we heard anybody talking about God in the street, that would surprise us very much. Men talk about baseball and business, automobiles and the weather, but no one would ever think of talking about God in the street. Nor do we expect people to talk about God at the dinner table. What a strange place that would be to talk about God! At the table we talk about school or the movies, about Mr. Harding or Mr. Hylan, about robbers and the circus, about the theater or a new suit of clothes. We have no time at the table to talk about God. And when we go into the country we do not talk about God because there are other things more interesting for us to talk about. There are trees and flowers and rocks and brooks and horses and cows and squirrels and birds, and butterflies and toadstools—all of them far more fascinating than God. Hardly anybody ever speaks of God when he is

taking a walk. But Jesus was different. No matter where He was, He liked to talk about God. When He went into the synagogue or the temple of course He talked about God, but He talked about God in the streets. Whenever He found Himself in a crowd He began to talk about God. He was not ashamed to talk about God in public. And when He sat down at the dinner table, even though He was away from home, and even though it was a big fashionable dinner, He often entertained the company by talking to them about God. Does not that seem strange? Who in New York would ever think of entertaining a dinner party by talking about God? The very thought of it makes one smile. And out in the country Jesus still kept talking of God. Indeed He talked more about God there than anywhere else. Everything in the country seemed to suggest God. When He looked at the grass, or at the flowers, or at the trees, or at the sunshine, or at the rain, it made Him think again of God. And the reason no doubt He had so much to say about God was that He was always thinking about Him. I presume the reason why we so seldom speak of Him is that we do not think of Him. We would speak of Him if we thought of Him, but we do not often think of Him, and we do not think of Him often because we do not see Him. Out of sight out of mind, says the old adage. We talk about the things that we see—marbles, bicycles, doll-babies, pictures, books, roller

skates, ribbons, hats, feathers, ouija boards, Teddy bears, ever so many things. But no one has seen God at any time nor is it possible to see Him, and therefore we do not often think of Him, and seldom talk about Him at the table or in the streets or in the fields. But Jesus was different. He was always feeling God's presence and was always trying to please Him. He believed that God liked to have Him talk about Him. Indeed, Jesus was sure that He was born in order that He might talk to men about God. He felt that His business in this world was to tell men what God is like. He was certain that the most important idea a human being can hold in his mind is the idea of God. When He was only twelve He asked learned Bible teachers in Jerusalem all sorts of questions about God. His mother was surprised that He should want to stay in the temple so long and could not understand why He asked so many questions. He told her that He felt it to be His duty to be about His Heavenly Father's business. The business which His Heavenly Father had given Him was to find out all about His Heavenly Father's character and plans, and make these known to others. And so all through His life Jesus kept talking to men about God. His supreme ambition was that everybody should know what God is like, for unless men know what He is like they can never love Him.

Men in those days had wrong notions of God—and I am sorry to say that many people have them

yet—and one of the many notions was that God was far away. He was an absent God. He had made the world a long time ago, and had then disappeared. He was in heaven, and heaven was above the sky, and the sky was so far off that many men were not certain whether He could hear what people were saying or see what they were doing. It often seemed as though He could neither hear nor see. Now an absent God is hardly any God at all, and Jesus did His best to persuade men to believe that God is very near. He has been in the world ever since He made it. He has never gone away and never can go away. He dwells in the heart of every one of His children: so that He sees everything and hears everything and knows everything which is thought and felt and said and done. It is never necessary to tell Him anything in order to inform Him, because He knows it all before we speak. He is wherever we are, and therefore we need not go to any one particular place to speak to Him. We can go into our own room and shut the door tight, and then speak to Him. He is there and He hears our softest whisper.

There was another foolish idea of God in men's minds and that was that God was unknowable. He was so vast that men felt it useless to try to understand Him. He was infinite, and how can any one get acquainted with the infinite? And so while men believed there was a God, He was hidden in a fog. Clouds and darkness were round

about Him, and they were so black and deep that no one could pierce through them. When God is unknown and unknowable men invent long names for Him. Such a name is Providence, spelled with a capital P. It is not a good name for God. It is too vague. It is too misty. No one can love Providence. No one can try to please Providence. Men sometimes call God the First Great Cause, but that is a poor name for God. It is like an icicle. It freezes the blood. Who can feel happy in the presence of the First Great Cause? Jesus did not like these long names for God. His favourite word was "Father." When He spoke to God He always said "Father," and He told men that when they spoke to God the best word to use was "Father." He liked the word because it was familiar and warm and simple and homey. Everybody knows what a father is like. A father is interested in his children, and feeds them, and protects them, and provides for them. That is what God does for us. He has a fatherly mind and a fatherly heart. It is wonderful how thoughtful and tender and loving an earthly father can be, but of course God is more thoughtful and more tender and more loving than any father we have ever known or read about. One day Jesus said to some men: "When your children ask for something good you do not give them something bad; when they ask for something they need, you do not give them something of no use. Now if you know how to give good gifts to

your children, how much more will your Heavenly Father give good things to those who ask for them." And so Jesus taught that we can know God. We can know Him because we are akin to Him. We are His children, and since that is so, His nature and our nature are the same. We think and feel and choose, and so does He. We sympathize and plan and love, and so does He. Our heart goes out to those who need our help, and so does His go out to those who need His help. We know Him not of course completely, but we know Him well enough to love Him and to understand what He wants us to do.

There was a third mischief-making idea in the hearts of men, and that was that God was solemn and stern. He was very hard and fearfully severe. He was a Judge, and a Judge who never smiled. He was a King, and a King whose wrath was terrible. Of course no one could be fond of a God like that. It is impossible to like a God at the thought of whom one shudders. We want to get away from any person of whom we stand in dread. We are always uncomfortable when we are afraid. A God who terrifies us takes from us our power to love Him. And so Jesus was always calling attention to the good-naturedness of God. He liked to think about God's gentle traits and winsome ways. He loved to watch the sunbeams and the showers because they made Him think of God's loving heart. They come down on everybody alike. A

farmer is dependent on sunbeams. Without sunbeams nothing in his fields will grow. Some farmers are good men and some farmers are bad men, and if God treated them according to their deserts, He would help the crops of the good farmer and refuse to help the crops of the bad farmer, but that is not God's way. He has a big, generous heart, and helps everybody just so far as He can. He can scatter sunbeams everywhere, and so He does it, no matter whether a farmer loves Him or not. Even enemies of God are supplied with sunbeams. But sunbeams are not a whit more important than raindrops. Without rain not a vegetable or a tree or a spear of grass will grow. Farmers are dependent on rain, and so God sends rain to everybody. Farmers who are stingy and cruel and mean get rain just as do their good neighbours, for God does not try to get even with men. He wishes them all well, and gives every one of them all the help that He can. If God were a grumpy Judge or a ferocious King He would be very careful in the distribution of His showers and His sunshine, but being a loving, generous-hearted father, and desiring to help His children, He pours out on them all the good things which they are able to receive. But Jesus did not stop with God's goodness to human beings. He loved to think of God's goodness to birds. He is a God who feeds birds, said Jesus, and this thought made His heart glad. You know what fun it is to feed birds in

Central Park. Think of what fun God must have in feeding all the birds in the whole world. He feeds them every day because He likes them, and He likes them so much that He watches them and even counts them. I do not see how He can do it, but He does. He can do it because He is God. He knows just how many birds there are in every flock, and when one of them dies He knows it. People do not notice the death of a bird. Who cares for a bird? A dozen can perish in a night and no one cares a straw. But God knows every bird, and not one of them can die without His notice. But His care extends even to flowers and blades of grass. He is the artist who makes flowers, not paper flowers, but real, living flowers which grow. He designs all the patterns and mixes all the colours. He does this because He likes to do it. He loves beautiful things and to make them fills Him with unspeakable joy. There are tailors who can make wonderfully gorgeous robes for Kings, but no royal coat is half so wonderful as the coat of flowers which God throws over the shoulders of a hill, or the garland of blossoms which He tosses into the lap of a meadow. And the grass blades are all His handiwork. Hardly anybody pays attention to them because grass is so common. We simply walk upon it and give it no thought whatever. But every tiny blade of it is an exquisite work of art. If you do not believe it, put a blade under the end of a microscope and spend a

minute in looking at it. And then walk down Fifth Avenue some afternoon and pick out the most beautiful things you can find in any of the shop windows and tell me if the blade of grass is not the most wonderful of them all. It made Jesus happy to think of God weaving the flowers and manufacturing the grass. Philosophers took delight in thinking of God as a King or a Judge, hurling thunderbolts at His enemies, or passing sentence on culprits on the Day of Judgment, but Jesus chose to think of Him feeding birds, or painting the flowers with bright colours, or fashioning the exquisite texture of the grass. It made Jesus happy to think of God as an artist. If you have never thought of Him as an artist this is a good day to begin. Think of Him always as the great poet, the great musician, the great sculptor, the great architect and the great painter. We should have no poets or musicians or sculptors or architects or painters if the love of the beautiful were not deep-rooted in the heart of God.

There was a fourth stupid way of thinking about God and that also Jesus tried to correct. Men thought God was too busy to think about common people. He might think now and then about them in the mass, but He could not be expected to take interest in individual men and women. In the first place there were too many of them, and moreover they were commonplace and unimportant, and why should God feel any concern about them? Of

course God was interested in warriors and Kings. He might pay attention to statesmen and scholars. Great writers and orators might now and then come into His mind, but certainly the common people could not expect to catch His eye. Indeed, there were wise men who claimed that God did not notice any human beings at all. They were all too insignificant to be thought of. He was high above them all, busied with the affairs of the divine government, and if any one imagined that God took any interest in humanity, it was due to his egotism and vanity, and not because he had any ground on which to build such an absurd opinion. But Jesus was sure that God cares for men. He cares for a sheep, just a common sheep, and of course He cares more for a man. He cares for one sheep, even though it is only one hundredth part of a flock, and therefore He cares for a man no matter how many other men there may be in the world. He cares for a bird, just a little bird, and therefore He must care for a man, for a man is worth immeasurably more than a bird. He cares for a flower, just an ordinary flower. There are tens of thousands of them, but He cares for each one of them. He cares much more for a man, no matter how common he may be. It was when Jesus began talking about the one man that His heart beat fast and His eyes glowed with a heavenly fire. There was no subject which so stirred Him and so thrilled Him as this. It was God's care for the individual

human being which made Jesus adore Him and love Him. God is not like most of the big men of the world. They are too high to see little folks, and too busy to pay attention to ordinary mortals. But God is different. Because He is God He sees everybody. Everybody is dear to Him. No one is so little as to be invisible and no one is so insignificant as to fall beneath His notice. His eye is on all. His heart is open to all. A king can speak to Him and so can a street sweeper. The millionaire can come into His presence and so also can the bootblack. The great and small alike can stand before Him. This is one of Jesus' greatest and deepest convictions—that every living man, woman and child is precious to God. Smallness only increases God's concern. The little ones of the earth are especially near to Him. Just as a father feels the deepest concern for the baby, so does God feel an unfailing concern for those who are helpless and little. Jesus made God lovable forever when He pictured Him as deeply interested in every member of the whole human family.

There was still another way in which men persisted in thinking wrongly of God. They thought of Him as spiteful and revengeful, taking delight in punishing those who had broken His laws. This was the most common of all the mistaken ideas of God, and the one which did the most to keep men away from Him. For every one has done wrong. Every one has broken God's commandments.

Every one has been stubborn and disobedient and ungrateful. Every one merits punishment. Every one deserves to be whipped. But Jesus says that God is not revengeful. There is no spite in His heart. He takes no delight in inflicting punishment. He holds no grudges. He is always ready to forgive. Nothing pleases Him more than a chance to forgive somebody. No matter how wicked a person may be, if he comes back he will find the door open. No matter how many times he may have done wrong, if he wants to do better God is ready to help him. No matter how many times he has fallen, God is always eager to pick him up. No matter how deep the stain, God is always desirous of washing it out. No matter how far one has wandered away, God is always ready to go out to seek and to save. He has the heart of a shepherd, and a shepherd never refuses to go in search of the lost lamb, no matter how great the distance or how fierce the storm. Certainly God will go farther for a man than a shepherd will go for a sheep. It was at this point that Jesus had most to say about God. It was here that men were most confused and bewildered, and therefore Jesus took special pains to make everything at this point bright as the day. When He was especially anxious to make a truth clear He told a story. A vivid story is a picture which everybody can understand. The best story Jesus ever told was the story about a bad boy who went

away from home to have a good time. He had a good time until his money ran out and then life began to be miserable. One day he was so wretched that he decided to go home and ask his father for a job as a servant. He had forfeited his place at the family table, but he was willing now to do anything and stay in the barn if only he could get enough to eat and to wear. But when he arrived home, he had a great surprise. His father rushed out to meet him and gave him a kiss. That was the best thing which the father could give, and so he gave him that first. He then gave him new shoes and also a ring. The boy had hoped for the shoes but he had not expected a ring. A ring was a luxury. He gave him a new suit of clothes and also some music. He had dreamed of the clothes but he had never dreamed of the music. The music was an extra. He gave him bread and butter and also the dainties of a banquet. He had longed for a square meal but he had not looked for a banquet. What a day that was! No one can picture the happiness of that boy. He was as happy as a boy can be, but he was not so happy as his father. A boy cannot possibly be so happy as his father. The father radiated joy. He was in raptures. He could not rest until he had invited all the neighbours in that they might share in his ecstasy. Now this, said Jesus, is my idea of God. God, I think, is a Father, and when any of His children get tired of doing wrong and come

back to Him, He receives them with a hug and a kiss and the spirit world rings with joy because a soul that was lost has been found.

The parable of the Prodigal Son was as far as Jesus could go in picturing in words the loving heart of God, but there was one step farther which it was possible for Him to take, He could live in His own life the very life of God. He could be so gentle and sympathetic, so generous and patient, so loving and forgiving that He could truly say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He could become the perfect image of God. He could fill His mind and His heart so full of love that through Him all mankind could find their way to God. And this He did. He always did the things which pleased God. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, and therefore God has highly exalted Him and has given Him a name which is above every name. When a writer in the New Testament makes a roll of the greatest men of Hebrew history, he reminds us that all these men are interested in what we think and say and do, but he does not ask us to look at them or to follow their example or to pattern our lives after theirs; he exhorts us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, because He is the captain and finisher of faith. He had faith in God as His Heavenly Father, and no disappointment however bitter, and no suffering however intense, and no defeat however galling, could break that

faith down. He passed from the cross to heaven, saying, "Father!" It was 1900 years ago that Jesus taught in Palestine, but His spirit is to-day abroad in all the world, and in every land that spirit is teaching men the character and purposes of God. Little by little Jesus' idea of God is driving out all other ideas. The old ideas are seen to be low and cheap and unworthy. Only the idea of Jesus can satisfy the human mind and heart. Before Jesus came men had many names for God. They called Him sometimes the God of Heaven, and sometimes the God of Hosts, and sometimes the God of Israel, and sometimes the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, but since Jesus lived, God has had a new name. It was Peter's favourite name for God, and it was Paul's favourite name also, and I hope it will be the favourite of every one of you. It is the best and highest, the sweetest and the holiest name for God that our world will ever know. Here it is: "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

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